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ABSTRACT

It is essential that school board members understand the important role that public sentiment plays both in the management of the public schools and in the determination of legislated powers of local school boards. The 14 articles from the "Illinois School Board Journal" presented here were chosen for the light they shed on public opinion. The articles are grouped under three headings--local control, school management, and the determination of public opinion. Collectively, the selections provide an overview of the impact that public sentiment has on the schools, ways to assess attitudes in the local community, and how to use opinion research data in decision-making. (Author/IRT)

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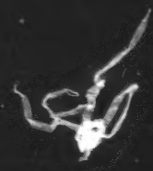
PUBLIC OPINION AND THE SCHOOL BOARD

Selected readings for school board members



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Introduction

It is essential that school board members understand the important role that public sentiment plays both in the management of the public schools and in determining the legislated powers of local school boards. The Editors of *Illinois School Board Journal*, therefore, are pleased to present the fourteeen articles contained in this booklet–all selected from the *Journal*, 1970 to 1977, for the light they shed on public opinion.

The selected articles cut a wide swath. They are grouped under three headings, as reflected in the table of contents: local control . . . school management . . . and how to find out what people think. Collectively, the selections provide an overview of the impact that public sentiment has on the schools, ways to assess attitudes in the local community, and how to use opinion research data in decision making.

The articles, however, do not explore the depths of opinion research or statistics. This booklet will not make the reader an expert in public opinion technology. Rather, it is intended to encourage school board members to take advantage of the technology that is available to them from other sources.

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Research suggests that what you want won't be what you'll get

Reprinted from the
Illinois School Board Journal
May-August 1976

Who is the senior partner in education?

By JAY W. STEIN

Public education in the United States today is governed by a partnership of local, state, and federal authorities.

While local autonomy is a sacred tradition, and while the state is legally responsible for education, it is no longer clear which is the senior partner, which is the junior, and which partner is the federal government.

With these concerns in mind, a recent study at Western Illinois University assessed not only the present relative influences of federal, state, and local governments on public education, but also what these relative influences *will* be in the 1980's and what they *should* be in the 1980's.

Those surveyed for the study were drawn from among the most visible groups of policy makers in education at all three levels—national, state, and local. Each group in turn was divided according to major function—lawmaking or policy formulation and administration or executive direction. Besides federal and state legislators, selected from those who serve on education and education-related committees, the groupings included administrators in federal and state education agencies. Local government spokesmen were school board presidents and school district superintendents in Illinois. A total of 901 questionnaires was mailed to the various random samplings.

The various groups of respondents are listed in the table on page 41. Their viewpoints concerning the present pattern of governmental and political influences on public education are given in Column A. Responses regarding future predictions are listed in Column B and on future preferences in Column C.

According to all respondents (all groups combined), the present influence on public education (Column A) emanates from the state and local governments in an almost equal amount, 39% each. The federal influence is viewed as considerably less at 22%.

Asked what the relative influence of each level of government *will* be in the 1980's (Column B), the respondents declared that the federal and state influences will be 30% and 42%, respectively, with 28% left to the local government.

A third question called for the respondent's statement of what *should* be the relative role of each governmental-political level on education in the 1980's (Column C). Respondents would like to see 20% from the federal, 35% from the state, and 45% from the local level.

Comparisons and contrasts among the opinions expressed by federal, state, and local officials offer some good news for local boards of education, along with some news that is not so good. The good news is that all of the groups surveyed—including congressmen—believe that local influence should be increased (or at least not decreased). The not-so-good news is that all of them—including school board presidents—also believe that it will not happen. They believe that, in spite of what *should* be, local influence will decline in the 1980's and that state and federal influences will increase.

Viewpoints on the relative governmental-political influences existing at present (Column A) are generally similar from one group to the next. State and local influences are regarded as fairly equal (varying only a few points from group to group) and somewhat higher than the federal influence. The group which takes exception is the federal. Both members of Congress and federal administrators make a higher assess-

Jay W. Stein is professor of political science and education at Western Illinois University, Macomb. He designed and directed the survey on which this article is based. *The survey was completed with aid granted by the University Research Council at Western.*

ment of the current federal influence than do state and local leaders. As one school board president commented, the difference in viewpoint probably reflects the lack of state and local awareness of numerous educational programs of comparatively recent origin. Most of these have been federally initiated; many are federally funded. Besides general aid, many kinds of categorical aid earmarked for special purposes have become integral parts of curricular offerings, enrollment trends, and plant development. One might list such widely varying areas as driver education, drug abuse instruction, counseling, science, and special assistance to minorities.

Local leaders may be admitting that their traditional hard work (talent, energy, and revenue raising) grows dim before the current dependence on federal monies and their accountability to the federal government. However, they believe firmly that they still retain the major influence at this time. Federal leaders appear to concede that, despite their own increased weight, the ongoing influence continues to belong to the local level. (Another part of the study, not reported here, which shows the leadership influences on specific sub-categories of public education such as finance, curriculum, and enrollment, supports this explanation.)

Looking to the future (Column B), federal leaders express a view closer to that of the state and local leaders. Members of Congress differ the most, diverging also from the educational agency administrators in Washington, but the difference is still relatively moderate. They constitute the only group to predict for the 1980's that the state level of influence will be about the same as the federal influence.

All leadership groups expect the federal level to increase its influence markedly from the present, as much as 10 percent and more. In general, the influence of the federal government is predicted to increase to roughly one-third of the total influence on public education. The federal lawmakers, in fact, see the federal role as carrying 36% of the influence. According to state officials, particularly members of the General Assembly, the relative extent of influence will be much more equally shared in the 1980's.

The marked increase predicted for the federal role and the decrease in the local role probably again reflect the keen awareness of the steadily growing dependence on Washington programs and financing. This national role seems well established and is unlikely to reverse itself within a decade. Some respondents may even feel that such reversal is impossible, thanks to the shaky condition of the local property tax and the absence of clear alternatives.

The role of state government is expected to remain about the same as it is at present. In part this may reflect the fact that the state is a key participant in carrying out much of the federal programming and financing.

The survey also gave respondents an opportunity

Opinions of Leadership Groups Regarding The Relative Influence of Governments on Public Education

Leadership Groups	Column A: Relative % of influence at present			Column B: Relative % of influence expected in 1980's			Column C: Relative % of influence preferred in 1980's		
	Federal	State	Local	Federal	State	Local	Federal	State	Local
Local (Illinois)									
School board presidents	22	42	36	30	46	24	19	33	48
School district superintendents	19	40	41	30	44	26	19	31	50
Combined local	20	41	39	30	45	25	19	32	49
State (Illinois)									
Members of General Assembly*	22	44	34	33	40	27	30	35	35
Administrators in government agencies	22	37	41	29	40	31	18	37	45
Combined state	22	39	39	30	40	30	21	37	42
Federal									
Members of Congress*	29	36	35	36	36	28	24	34	42
Administrators at U.S. Office of Education	23	36	41	27	41	32	21	38	41
Combined federal	26	36	38	32	38	30	23	36	41
All respondents	22	39	39	30	42	28	20	35	45

(All percentages are rounded off)

*Lawmakers surveyed are those serving on education-related committees.

Senior partner *continued*

to measure their predictions against their preferences for the 1980's (Column C). In expressing their views of what *should* be the relative influence of the three government levels in public education, school board presidents and superintendents hold that the federal role should be the least influential, only 19%, about the same as they hold it to be at present, 20%. All of the other groups, except for the state government lawmakers, would like to see the local level exercise a modestly higher influence than at present. The state lawmakers would like to see each of the three levels exercise approximately a third of the total influence, with the state and local each having a slight edge at 35%. Preferences expressed by the local leaders would seem to foretell a determination to keep the reins of influence within the community.

Local leaders assert that the second greatest influence on public education should come from the state level. The assertion seems to mean that while school board presidents and superintendents have come to enjoy a certain reliance on Washington for the infusion of funds into the school system, the historic and traditional state support of public education should not succumb to an increasing amount of federal influence.

School board presidents want to see the state carrying almost a third of the influence, down from what they think it is now or what it is predicted to be in the 1980's. This desire parallels the preferences on the part of all other groups for slightly more than one third of the influence from the state level. The two groups preferring the highest influence for the state level, are the administrators in state educational agencies and the administrators in the federal U.S. Office of Education.

The considerable difference between the predictions for the 1980's (what will be) and the preferences (what should be) raises questions of an ominous inevitability. Are the predicted trends irreversible, especially when the expressed desire for the 1980's is in marked contrast? Is the leadership in any one group so weak and helpless that it cannot plan? As one observer stated, perhaps there is no plan.

In characterizing the school board president response, the closeness of their viewpoints to those of the school district superintendents is very evident. For most estimates, whether concerning the present or the future, board presidents and superintendents vary only a point or two. In their statements of how much relative influence the federal level should wield, they agree completely. In no other category—state or federal—do two groups of respondents display such unity.

Reprinted from the
Illinois School Board Journal
January-February 1977

Local what?

Once upon a time, most school decisions were made locally. In particular, local officials made those decisions regarding what would be taught and how and those related to the activities of pupils and employees.

When a teacher or principal concluded that a student ought to be expelled, the decision was made on the scene with no reference to authority higher than the school board. If the community placed a high value on Bible reading, then that could be accommodated right along with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Times have changed—and not entirely for the better.

First disadvantaged groups and then individual students and employees discovered that they had certain rights protected by the *U.S. Constitution.* (Not that school officials ever had the authority to discriminate or abridge individual liberties; they just weren't questioned when they did.) Disadvantaged groups came to include the physically and mentally handicapped, persons who did not speak English, the poverty stricken, and now women, in addition to racial and ethnic minorities.

Then state and federal lawmakers decided that, as they increased their financial commitments to education, they ought to:

1) Play a more direct role in setting priorities for schooling, such as in vocational and career education, in order to further the social and political interests of the nation; and
2) Spell out more clearly in the statutes the rights of all citizens in relation to the schools and see that those rights are observed.

Legislative interest in the relationship between schools and society was quickly followed by a burgeoning bureaucracy. The sweeping enactments of the Congress and state legislatures must be translated into detailed regulations, communicated, enforced, and monitored. Hence, each new law brings with it a new agency (or part of one) to see that the law is implemented and obeyed.

As a result, local school officials find they have less and less to do with setting educational priorities, but more and more to do in satisfying the insatiable appetites of regulatory agencies for facts and figures. Obviously, many complex factors contribute to this situation. But it's worth the effort to try sorting them out because:

1) Public dissatisfaction with educational quality (results) may be related to our growing preoccupation with legal requirements and report forms at the expense of pupil and teacher performance.
2) Time will continue to change things. The situation may get worse, but time—like a pendulum—has a way of correcting excesses. The same courts which prohibit excesses in the use of local school authority also support the reasonable use of that authority.

Too much law?

When a top industrial executive retired last year, he was asked whether he'd do it all over again if he could. Was the struggle to the top worth it?

He said, no. The intrusion of government controls into every aspect of his business had removed all the fun, he said, and he'd probably find a different way to make a living.

Denial of his life's work was probably an exaggeration, but there are people in education who can sympathize with the sentiment. School administrators today are so bogged down with work unrelated to kids or classrooms that you have to wonder whether they selected their careers because they like education or because they like to fill out forms.

A recent headline in *Newsweek* called attention to the problem by asking: "Too much law?" The article looked primarily at the growing body of law based on court decisions and at judges who assume control of school districts.

"The fourth branch of government" is the culprit, according to Owen B. Kiernan, executive secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, referring to government bureaus and agencies. These are the relatively anonymous bodies that develop regulations to implement laws passed by Congress and state legislatures.

Some people, of course, blame the lawmakers for enacting legislation intended to cure every conceivable ill, whether social, political, economic, or purely personal.

School board members and administrators typically agree that all three sources create terrible headaches.

"I used to spend 90 percent of my time working with people and 10 percent with paper," says one rural district superintendent. "Now the ratio is reversed.

How am I supposed to build a good faculty when I can't get out of the office to talk to them?"

Moreover, board members and administrators generally agree on what should be done: "Give us back the local control that we used to have."

In other words, get off our backs with the lawsuits, the regulatory minutia, the inspections, the endless reports and forms, the directives, edicts, and accountings. Let us get back to our main mission, which is to see that youngsters get educated. Maybe then we can do something about those declining test scores.

It's not as though school people don't find a sympathetic ear. The national Council of Chief State School Officers continually struggles to reduce the bureaucratic redtape coming out of Washington. Ironically, chief state school officers have to be viewed by local people as part of the problem, even while trying to be part of the solution. The states initiate a large share of the new laws and regulations.

A few members of Congress also express alarm at the strangling effect of excessive regulation. U.S. Senator Charles Percy is among them and is co-sponsoring legislation designed to curb the independent power of governmental agencies. Percy points out, among other things, that:

- 32 percent of those polled recently in a nationwide survey thought big government was the single biggest threat to the country's well-being. Only 10 percent felt that way about big business.
- The Comptroller General estimates that federal regulation costs the economy more than $60 billion a year.

Elsewhere, *Newsweek* reports that colleges and universities spend $2 billion a year collecting data, keeping records, filling out reports, and otherwise complying with federal regulations. Harvard University faculty spent 60,000 hours keeping required records during the 1974-75 school year.

Back in the business world, one firm in Toledo, Ohio, told *Business Week* it had to file more than 500 reports with 15 federal bureaus and 2,500 other reports to state and local agencies.

Clearly, the problems are widespread. They also are becoming more widely recognized even by the general public (which eventually pays the bills). Whether things will get better before they get worse is debatable. Senator Percy's legislation was in the hopper a year ago and didn't get far. Everyone is opposed to regulations and required reports—except for the ones they initiate or the ones that support their own pet projects.

Colleges and universities spend $2 billion a year keeping records to comply with federal regulations.

One might reasonably wonder why schools permit the federal government to push them around. After all, education is not a federal function—it's a state function. All schools need to do is to forego federal money and then they can toss those report forms in the wastebasket.

This is true up to a point—at least it was at one time. Consider the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling that state and local governments are not subject to federal labor standards. However, state government in many respects is subordinate to the federal—and school districts are part of state government. Whatever Washington can require of the state legislature, it can require of school districts.

The state-local partnership

School boards traditionally have possessed extensive latitude in local school affairs—not because they own any inherent authority, but because that is how the legislature wants it.

Education is and has always been a state function. It's one of those functions left to the states through the "reserved powers" clause of the Tenth Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution*.

The Illinois General Assembly has seen fit to delegate certain duties and powers to locally elected school boards. While many statutory limitations are placed on the school board's authority to act, it does have the power to enact policies within the confines of those limitations.

At first glance, there is no doubt as to the legislature's intent. Article 10 of *The School Code* is rather explicit in setting forth the duties and powers of local school boards. This neatly compacted section of the *Illinois Revised Statutes* extends to school boards a balanced portion of responsibility and authority. Article 10 represents a compact between the legislature and the local board—a *quid pro quo* arrangement whereby the legislature shifts certain burdens off its own shoulders in return for also shifting certain discretionary powers. That is, in holding the local board responsible for the caliber of textbooks, the legislature lets that board select those textbooks.

Article 10 is still intact, but the legislature has placed a growing number of restrictions on school boards. The trend is for the state to assume an increasing amount of responsibility and authority which had previously been delegated to the local level. This is only partially the doing of the legislature, however. Also, consider that:

1) **The federal government** has forced the state to

exercise more direct control of the schools.

2) **The creation of a State** Board of Education, based on a constitutional mandate, introduces an important new factor in the state-local relationship. Ask 50 people to describe the legal relationship between the State Board and local boards and you'll get 50 different answers.

3) **In November, 1970,** Illinois voters elected a dedicated reformer as superintendent of public instruction. Michael Bakalis was the first to regard his as a truly regulatory agency. The OSPI previously took a more benign, service-oriented posture. Although Bakalis softened his approach after a couple of years, he never softened his determination to change things. Simply by making some decisions that previously had been made locally, and by making school districts answer more fully to the state, he forged changes in the state-local relationship that could prove permanent. The courts ruled him out of order when he tried to settle a labor dispute in Decatur. Despite vocal protests on many other occasions, this was the only time Bakalis was seriously challenged.

It is wrong to ask whether the legislature *can* impose a particular program or restriction; the proper question is whether the legislature *should* do it or leave the matter to local discretion.

The challenge facing school boards is to re-establish with the state a relationship that is workable and understandable. Just as an employee's performance cannot be fairly evaluated without a clear specification of duties and expectations, so a school board cannot perform to standards that are not stated. Today's school board is justified in asking the legislature: "What do you want from us?"

To the average board member, it appears that the state is imposing more and more responsibilities on the schools while leaving local officials less and less authority to deal with those responsibilities. It's certainly true that schools are being asked to do more and more beyond simply teaching the basics. Few people would argue that educational institutions should not play a key role in promoting human equality, saving the environment, and perpetuating our democratic form of government.

However, the legislature sometimes imposes a responsibility without providing the corresponding authority (or the financial resources). Requiring binding arbitration in the dismissal of tenured teachers is probably the best example of the legislature's failure to keep the faith with school boards. (Boards retain statutory responsibility for removing unsatisfactory teachers while lacking the statutory authority to do so.)

Generally speaking, however, the legislature usually does not shift authoritiy without shifting responsibility. To the extent that the legislature mandates courses of study, the legislature places on its own shoulders the responsibility for curriculum. As school boards have less and less to say about what courses shall be offered, they shoulder less and less of the responsibility for the appropriateness of curriculum. School board members may not like this state of affairs, but the legislature is fully within its rights in expanding or contracting the responsibilities of boards. It is wrong to ask whether the legislature *can* mandate a particular school program; the proper question is whether the legislature *should* do it. It comes down to a question of whether the public is better served by legislative action or by leaving a matter to local discretion.

The burden is on the advocates of local control to convince the legislature that the public is better served through local decision making. This is an awesome burden, indeed, in view of the many special interest groups and individual lawmakers who have pet notions they want imposed on school districts.

The more difficult relationship to fathom is that between the local board and the State Board of Education. The latter is a body required by the *Illinois Constitution*; the former is not. However, the legislature is where the real authority for education resides and it is up to the legislature to determine the respective powers and duties of both the State Board and local boards.

As stated earlier, the duties and powers of local boards have always been pretty easy to find in the statutes. The problem comes in examining the duties and powers of both the "old" superintendent of public instruction and the "new" State Board of Education. Statutory language delegating language to these state agencies is quite similar to the language relating to local boards.

In Article 10 of *The School Code*, we find that it is a duty of local school boards:

> "To adopt and enforce all necessary rules for the management and government of the public schools of their district."
>
> "To direct what branches of study shall be taught and what apparatus shall be used."

In Article 2, we find that the superintendent of public instruction has these powers and duties (which are now transferred to the State Board):

> "To supervise all the public schools in the State."
>
> "To make rules necessary to carry into efficient and uniform effect all laws for establishing and

Local what? *continued*

maintaining free schools in the State."

"To determine . . . efficient and adequate standards for the physical plant, heating, lighting, ventilation, sanitation, safety, equipment and supplies, instruction and teaching, curriculum, library, operation, maintenance, administration and supervision, and to grant certificates of recognition. . . ."

In 1973, the legislature created the State Board and set forth its duties to include:

". . . all duties currently delegated to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. . . ."

"The Board shall be responsible for the educational policies and guidelines for public and private schools. . . ."

It is also important to note that the legislature added this final sentence to the duties of the State Board:

"The Board shall recommend the passage and the legislation necessary to determine the appropriate relationship between the Board and local boards of education. . . ."

Two points stand out from these sections of *The School Code*. First, quite a few people are delegated the duty to "make policies" governing the operation of the schools. Second, neither the State Board nor anyone else has suggested legislation which would determine "the appropriate relationship" between the State Board and the local board.

The result is that both the State Board and the local board claim similar responsibilties for running the schools. The State Board, in fact, often ignores the existence of local boards in its communications, in establishing various appeal procedures, and in issuing directives to school board employees. For their part, many local school leaders would like to look on the State Board as a benevolent and benign supporter, an advocate of better funding, a ready source of helpful services.

As divergent as they may be, both views have precedent. The days when administrators and boards had free rein in running their schools are not far behind us. That was local control and still is in the minds of many.

The State Board and the Illinois Office of Education, on the other hand, are responding to federal pressures and following the lead of Michael Bakalis in altering the traditional definition of local control. The State Board is an advocate of adequate school funding and the Office of Education does provide services to school districts. But the words that cement the state-local partnership most firmly are:

"Hire another social worker or we'll cut off your state aid."

Or words to that effect.

Whether a particular decision should be made locally or by the state may not be clear. But it is certainly clear who controls the purse strings and that's enough to bluff most school boards into compliance, even when those same boards question the propriety of a particular directive.

Many school boards are at a disadvantage in not having continuing access to expert legal guidance in those areas where the law is new or is less than crystal clear. Just as students and employees once surrendered their constitutional rights because they didn't know they had any, so school boards today lose their powers because they don't know what they are. (Some boards that do understand their powers are unwilling to spend school funds in defending them, of course.) So the State Board is able to impose its priorities on school districts, even in those matters that appear to involve discretionary powers of local boards. It's simply a matter of taking charge of a legally confused relationship.

An uncertain future

The future of school boards might seem to depend upon the legislature's clearly delineating their powers in relation to the powers of the State Board. However, the growing federal presence adds another threatening dimension: Will the state be able to keep control of education away from Washington?

In the business world, according to one knowledgeable spokesman, the problem is one of public sentiment. General Motors Chairman Thomas A. Murphy says that lawmakers and regulators are merely reacting to public opinion and that if business would serve consumers more adequately, the demand for government controls would subside.

There is something in what Murphy says for school officials. Many unfavorable court decisions have resulted from the thoughtless acts of school boards and administrators. Although these court suits involve a minute fraction of total school districts, they affect all districts. And although public polls show that most citizens bear no ill will toward schools, those same polls show that most citizens are poorly informed about schools.

It's possible, therefore, that school officials create some of their own grief by not marshalling public support or, in some cases, by not adequately representing community values.

Education, however, is a governmental function. Public policy in education is established by elected representatives in the legislature and on school boards —not by popularity polls. These elected representatives are held accountable both by the courts (nobody likes to be sued) and by the political process (nobody likes to lose an election). But these processes are slow. Witness the regular criticism of Congress and the legislature for their failure to respond rapidly to social needs.

The road to rapid change is to get a piece of enabling legislation enacted into law, with responsibility for implementation assigned to an administrative

continued on page 15

Special NCCE Commission calls for revitalizing of legislative process in educational policy-making.

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November-December 1975

Listen to the citizens in public school governance

By CARL MARBURGER

When the National Committee for Citizens in Education heard from a Gallup Poll and other sources that citizens' participation in public education in the United States was declining, we felt it was part of our role as a citizens' advocate to try to determine if, in fact, this was true, and if so, what could be done about it. Consequently, we established a special NCCE Commission on Education Governance, which undertook a series of public hearings in five major cities to accomplish this objective. At the hearings we heard testimony from school board members, teachers, legislators, and other citizens. The full findings of the commission and its subsequent recommendations, of which this presentation is a part, will be published in book form later this summer.

We started the project with questions of who does control public education, who should control public education, and what are or should be the roles of citizens in public education. We found early in the series of hearings, however, that it was better to ask what controls public education. Our answer, focused on three forces that had the greatest effect on the administrative control of education: teachers, citizens, and state legislators.

The issues we found that give rise to the appearance of undemocratic practices in school governance and hence, the frustrations of these groups in their efforts to participate, break down as follows: At the school level we have heard how the administrative process of decentralization provides opportunities for citizen participation. We have heard about successes and failures of citizen advisory committees, the most successful being those most under the "will of the principal." By and large, however, we found at our hearings that most citizen participation is grounded in an "advisory role" outside of the policy-making process. This concept is an inversion of the historical and legislative concept of the citizen as the policy-maker and also an inversion of our more modern notion that the skilled technician presents the alternatives and consequences,

Carl Marburger is a senior associate with the National Committee for Citizens in Education, an organization dedicated to protecting the rights of parents and pupils in public education. He is a former commissioner of education in New Jersey.

This article is reprinted with permission of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. It was originally prepared as one of several presentations to the PSBA Commission to Strengthen Local Lay Control of the Public Schools.

The PSBA Commission recently completed a year-long study and concluded that there has been a "substantial deterioration in local lay control of public education during the last several years." The Commission blames increased state legislation that spells out broad policies and the state education agency and state board whose interpretive rules, regulations, and guidelines "have increased their share of power at the expense of the local school board."

The Commission also puts some blame on ineffective school boards and public apathy, which have combined to "create a fertile field for aggressive union leaders, adept lawyers, and professional educators to seriously erode the lay control of public education."

PSBA has been locked in a long struggle with the Pennsylvania State Board of Education over a complete rewriting of that state's school code. PSBA says the proposed new code removes many of the powers traditionally granted to local boards and turns them over to the state board.

"State legislative enactments to guarantee uniformity of schooling and to assist in making schools efficient and productive have severely weakened the strength of local school boards as managers, especially in policy-making and collective bargaining."

while the citizens and their representatives set policy.

The uneven balance of power in the administration branch of government in policy-making is evidenced also at the local and state school board levels, as well as the legislative level. The assignment of executive functions to highly skilled experts has altered the legislative role of local and state school board members. State legislative enactments to guarantee uniformity of schooling and to assist in making schools efficient and productive have severely weakened the strength of local school boards as managers, especially in policy-making and collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining itself has produced a dramatic change in the governance of American schools. We suggest that legislatures are allowing the balance of power to tip in favor of teachers' organizations. In its purest sense, however, collective bargaining is an important model of democratic decision-making and can help improve American public education if it is practiced properly and openly. The citizen has nothing to fear from collective bargaining if it is accessible to the public.

In school policy-making and decision-making, historical attempts to "take politics out of the schools" by enhancing administrative "professionalism," along with efforts to achieve efficiency and productivity, have given rise in part to an industrial model, at both the district and local school levels. We believe there is a need to distinguish between the political and the industrial models for decision-making and to substitute the former for the latter.

Policy model for educational services

Based on analysis of the foregoing issues, the NCCE commission's plan for restructuring school governance focuses on the relationship between the administrative and legislative functions of government and proposes a reconsideration of current administrative arrangements. Our intent is to form a policy model for educational services that assures that the legitimate rights and interests of individuals and communities are adequately represented. We recommend the adoption of a total plan for restructuring school governance, but if fiscal constraints, essential planning time and organizational needs and other considerations necessitate adopting some pieces and not others, we strongly urge they be used as interim steps towards a total plan for democratic school governance.

Recommendation I. The NCCE Commission on Education Gvoernance recommends that steps be taken to revitalize the legislative process in educational policy-making. There are three distinct levels at which school policy should be formulated: the school site level, the school district level, and the state level. At each of these levels, a legislative body should function both as policy-makers and as monitors of policy implementation.

Recommendation II. We recommend that there be a redistribution of policy decisions at each legislative level: state, local, and school site. At the school site level there should be a school council with appropriate responsibility and authority. This school council should be elected and should share authority and re-

"Elected school councils should share responsibility for curriculum, school program budgeting, school progress reports and personnel evaluation."

sponsibility for curriculum, school program budgeting, school progress reports and personnel evaluation.

Local school boards should retain authority and responsibility for equitable distribution of services, purchasing, contracting for professional services, special education services, long-range planning for school site and program development, accounting and fiscal control, and evaluation and dissemination of information on school performance. Local school boards should especially retain responsibility for teacher negotiations and be adequately provided with consultant help to assist in this endeavor.

The NCCE commission also recommends that the local school board establish procedures to involve the public in the negotiations process. Suggested procedures are inclusion of lay members in collective bargaining committees, public hearings, broad dissemination and distribution of the board's position and issues, open and publicized negotiations and press attendance at meetings.

State boards of education should maintain ultimate authority for guaranteeing that educational services are adequately and equally provided; providing for minimal state standards; evaluating and disseminating information on school performance; guaranteeing the civil rights of parents, students and teachers; developing guidelines and regulations for restructuring school organizations and policy-making, and guaranteeing compliance with judicial and state orders.

State legislatures should substantially increase the power and staff support for education committees so that effective legislative monitoring can be performed.

I'm sorry, but I can't help your school board predict next year's school revenue. What do you think I am, a Governor?

"At the school site level, the school district level and the state level, a legislative body should function both as policy-makers and as monitors of policy implementation."

Also, each legislative task must be accomplished independently of the executive or administrative branch.

Balanced negotiating incentives

The NCCE commission recommends that the state guarantee the right of teachers to organize and negotiate on matters relating to teacher welfare and benefits and also that basic ground rules for bargaining be established to provide each side with balanced incentives to reach agreement. Such existing constraints as tenure laws, required instruction days and pupil-teacher ratios make negotiating sides unequal and should be revised.

State laws requiring budget submission by date and form should be revised to allow for a more desirable economic and program outcome. The effects of budget laws on collective bargaining should be taken into consideration and efforts should be made to isolate the budgetary process from the negotiating process.

The state's major responsibility in public education collective bargaining is to establish a set of rules which is fair to all sides and guarantees adequate public access and influence. Once that framework is established, state officials should remain bystanders in local disputes. The NCCE commission recommends that all educational meetings conducted at whatever level, including legislative committee meetings and negotiating sessions, be open to the public and/or its representatives and to representatives of the news media.

As an ongoing ramification of the reform process, a gubernatorial task force should be appointed in each state to revitalize the education system as an accessible and responsive democratic institution providing equal educational opportunity for all.

The NCCE commission recognizes these recommendations for reform are a conceptual framework for the governance structures of public schools. As such, they are a statement of what needs to be accomplished, not a statement of how to get it done.

The key to the situation is that school boards have been dependent on the expertise of the administration too long. They should assume legislative monitoring responsibility and reach out in negotiations sessions to obtain consultant help. They must be on the lookout for what's happening to kids. ◘

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Defensive school boards are asking for trouble

If ever school boards needed good communications, the time is now.

The majority of school districts across Illinois must make unprecedented reductions in spending. In most cases, the budget cuts go deep into programs and staff, drawing forth painful cries from employees whose services the district can no longer afford and from parents who see their children being denied their accustomed educational programs. Communities that see their schools being closed and student bodies transferred elsewhere cry out perhaps the loudest.

The blame, of course, is heaped upon the local school board. The board can react in one of two ways:

1) The board can react reflexively to the emotional outcries by withdrawing into itself. Such a board will quietly work out its own solutions to finance problems and try to keep the bad news from the public. If the news leaks out, the board may "go underground" through illegal secret meetings in order to avoid emotional confrontations with irate citizens.

2) The board can decide to share the problem with the community. Recognizing that the factors creating the financial crisis are beyond the board's control, this board says to its community: "Here's the problem. It's yours as much as it is ours. Help us select the best way to live with it.".

Boards that react defensively are compounding their own troubles. Not only do they draw the initial blame for budget cuts—and do nothing to allay or shift that blame—they draw additional public criticism for trying to hide the facts. Those that discuss their budgetary woes in closed or secret sessions also are breaking the law.

Hopefully, not many boards are taking the defensive approach or attempting to work out their problems privately. The Illinois Press Association reports, however, that a few school boards appear to be doing just that. David West, secretary-manager of the IPA, recently called the Illinois Association of School Boards to voice his concern.

"Several of our member newspapers have expressed suspicion that some school boards are violating the Open Meetings Act," West said. "Without a thorough investigation of each situation, there is no way of knowing for sure what is going on. However, there are reports of boards making some very important budget cuts with no public discussion. It is natural to suspect that such discussions are taking place in illegal secret meetings."

Apart from being illegal, West makes the additional point that such meetings are bound to make life doubly difficult for board members and administrators. The news media will eventually find out what is going on and the public will assume—rightly or wrongly—that school officials have something to hide.

He might have added that defensive withdrawal by a school board is more than self-destructive. It prevents the board from capitalizing on an opportunity to put the "public" back in public education in a helpful and constructive way.

Rarely is education faced with an issue that attracts the concern of virtually everyone. Most school districts hear regularly from special interest groups and individuals with personal complaints. When the issue is cutting out sports, dropping elementary music, increasing class size, or closing a school—virtually everyone becomes interested.

Human nature being what it is, the first people to approach the board with "advice" will often be those who condemn the board no matter what and vote against a tax increase. But there is a silent majority in most districts that also cares about schools. This group generally assumes that the board, administration, and faculty are doing an acceptable job. This is the group that must be heard from and be involved in making major crisis decisions. This group is numerically superior to all others, and is the one that must support whatever final decision is made and must vote in favor of a tax increase (if that is part of the final decision).

Apathy is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it means that the silent majority is staying off the board's back. On the other hand, it lends undue weight to the viewpoints of those special interest groups and others who do speak up.

There are persons in every community who devote their lives to bedeviling the school board (or so it seems). In a crisis, they are the ones that panic the board and try to stampede it into some unwise course

of action. If the board can hold on and keep its wits about it, it is possible to cut through the emotions and accusations and get support of the responsible members of the community. It is essential, however, that the board:

1) Be tough enough to withstand criticism and yet sensitive enough to understand what the *total* community thinks.

2) Be willing to share decision making. If the schools belong to the people, then they ought to provide what the people want and are willing to pay for.

Involvement of the community—through hearings, advisory committees, surveys, etc.—generates some problems of its own. Committees, for example, produce their own internal politics and personality clashes. But community involvement is frequently accomplished effectively and guidance is available from several sources.

There is no reason for school officials to take all of the blame for the current financial crisis. The causes are mostly external, including an economy that combines spiraling prices with unemployment, declining birth rates, growing demands for services, and a lack of financial planning at the state level. Add to these the public's traditional dislike for tax increases.

As a key part of its communications effort, the school board should inform its citizens of (a) the district's financial facts of life—income vs. expenses—and (b) what brought those facts about.

In addition to seeking community understanding of its financial plight, the school board should let the community share in the decision of how to live with that plight. The board need not surrender its ultimate authority and responsibility. But when the board and the community are confronted with all of the same facts, chances are good that both will come to about the same conclusions.

When the community is faced with a choice between a tax increase or a serious program cut, at least some people will catch on to what the school board is up against. And it is, after all, the entire community that will have to live with the final decision—GRG

I like your background, but I'm afraid you'll need a few more college credits before the state will approve you as a school volunteer.

Local what? *continued from page 10*

agency. Then watch that agency grow and expand upon that law.

The notion that public sentiment will determine the eventual role of local boards may be wishful thinking. A 1976 Gallup poll revealed that most people (67 percent) thought local boards should have more responsibility for running the schools. But there are many forces working to the contrary.

For one thing, board members, administrators, and teachers are all human. They make mistakes. It's an unfortunate fact that when one misguided teacher turns a cattleprod on one recalcitrant pupil, thousands of school administrators across the state may soon be required to collect data proving that cattleprods are not used in their schools.

When one school board loses a lawsuit for refusing to let a girl take auto mechanics, the resulting furor produces a ban on father-son banquets.

When a few school boards fail to provide due process in suspending students, the result is a proposal to take disciplinary powers away from local officials. This in spite of the public's ranking of student discipline (lack of) as the major problem with schools.

Once created, government agencies are not all that responsive to public sentiment.

But what other hope is there for school boards than to build public support by giving constituents a fair deal and working to convince lawmakers to extend them the same?—GRG

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Gallup's 1976 public attitudes toward education

By MARY ELLEN SERA

(*NSBA Newsservice*)—The American public believes that local school policies should be set by local school boards. At the same time, citizens want much more involvement in decision making than they now have.

School board members may find these the most interesting conclusions in the "Eighth Annual Gallop Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," conducted last April and published in the October *Phi Delta Kappan*.

Sixty-seven percent of the adults questioned said they would like to see local school boards—not state or federal governments—take on more responsibility in running the schools.

By an even greater margin, 90% of the respondents indicated a willingness to serve on citizen advisory committees, if such committees existed in their own local districts. In his analyss of the survey, George Gallup notes that while many of the 90% who said they would like to serve on such committees "might find it impossible or impractical to carry out their intention, still an extraordinary number of persons in a typical community are sufficiently interested to fill places on a score of committees. And, if such committees were appointed, then hundreds of citizens might be involved in local school matters."

Apparently, the public shares school board members' concerns about "unionization of teachers" and bargaining. Thirty-eight percent of those polled feel that teacher unionization has "hurt the quality of public school education," 27% feel it has made no difference, and 22% think it has helped. Ironically, while only 22% of the respondents think that teacher unions have helped, 52% approve "extending teachers' bargaining powers beyond pay and working conditions" to such matters as class size, the curriculum, and teaching methods.

Teacher bargaining was one of the few topics in the survey where the age and sex of the respondent made a significant difference in opinion: women are far more receptive than men to extending the scope of teacher bargaining (56% of women favor this, as opposed to 47% of men), and 73% of both sexes in the 18-29 age group approve extending the scope of teacher bargaining powers to include such matters as the curriculum, class size, and teaching methods.

Lack of discipline again surfaces as the most important problem local districts must deal with today. For the seventh time in eight years, "lack of discipline" was the most mentioned among all problems confronting public schools.

Moreover, a question new to the survey this year (soliciting opinions on ways to "*improve* the quality of public school education") bared answers that reiterate the public's concern about lack of discipline. The top responses to "improve" schools:

Devote more attention to teaching of basic skills	**51%**
Enforce stricter discipline	**50%**
Meet individual needs of students	**42%**
Improve parent/school relations	**41%**
Emphasize moral development	**39%**

In a related question regarding children's moral behavior, 67% of the respondents said the schools "should take on a share of the responsibility" in this domain—traditionally a task of parents and the church. And, of the many qualities important to the overall development of children (such as thinking for oneself, getting along with others, accepting responsibility), people most frequently chose "high moral standards" as the quality most neglected by parents and schools alike. When asked to identify citizen advisory committees on which they would like to sit, half of those willing to serve selected committees dealing with "discipline and related problems."

The "back to basics" movement is gaining public support as revealed in responses to several questions on this year's survey.

"Teaching of basic skills" emerges first among improvements in the quality of education desired by the public. Respondents cited "poor curriculum" far more often this year than last as a major problem in the public schools. Moreover, 59% of those polled believe the "decline in national test scores of students in recent years" means "the quality of education today is

declining." Asked to rate the local public schools, only 13% of the sample gave a grade of "A;" 29% assigned a grade of "B." To brake this perceived slide in the quality of public education today, 65% of the adults queried said they now favor standard nationwide examinations as a high school graduation requirement. Career education, too, received high public support with 52% favoring job and career information in the elementary school curriculum and 80% favoring more emphasis on careers and career preparation in high school. Asked how they would improve the quality of their local schools, 39% responded "emphasize career education and the development of salable skills."

Although widely ballyhooed in the media, public school early childhood education and preschool programs have not gained the support that would merit the increased taxes necessary to establish them. The question: "A proposal has been made to make child-care centers available for all preschool children as part of the public school system. This program would be supported by taxes. Would you favor or oppose such a program in your school district?" The response: 46% favor; 49% oppose. On the other hand, the relatively new concept of parent education (courses provided by the schools to help parents "help their children in school") won approval in this year's Gallup study. Seventy-seven percent thought it a good idea and half of those said they would be willing to pay additional taxes to support such programs.

What about overall budget cuts? Sympathy toward teachers appears high. The majority of those citizens polled would neither cut teacher salaries, nor the number of teachers unless enrollments were to decline markedly. If their districts were "forced" to make cuts for lack of money, the majority (72%) of the public would reduce the number of administrative personnel and (52%) would cut counselors on the staff. Only 39% favor reducing the number of subjects offered. Even fewer respondents favored cutting out "after-school activities like bands, clubs, athletics, etc." Reducing the number of teachers by increasing class size was favored by only 23% of those questioned; cutting all teachers' salaries by a set percentage was supported by an even smaller 18%.

The annual survey is conducted by the Gallup Poll and sponsored by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. The data represent national public opinions, not necessarily those of any one local school district. Since the questions are not copyrighted, local school boards wishing to employ the same questions asked in the Gallup survey are free to do so. Reprints of this "Eighth Annual Gallup Survey of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools" can be ordered from: Director of Administrative Services, Phi Delta Kappa, Box 789, Eighth and Union, Bloomington, Indiana 47401. The minimum order is 25 copies for $5. Additional copies are ten cents each.

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Public opinion shifts against unions

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Developments in Personnel Management
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Prior to the September 18 vote in the Senate to uphold the White House on the 5 percent federal pay boost, the signs of a sharp public reaction to the public employee unions were becoming more manifest. They included the following.

- In early September, the Harris Poll reported that public support swung against the right to strike for policemen and firemen. The change was from a 47 to 46 percent plurality favoring the strike right in 1974 to a 50 to 45 percent tally in opposition in polling done this summer. In summarizing the results of recent polling on public employees and their organizational and strike rights, the Harris report said: "In every case, the shift has been in the same direction — toward a lowering of public willingness to grant government workers the right to strike.
- The pigeonholing, despite vigorous efforts by Governor Edmund (Pat) Brown, Jr., key legislators, and UCLA Law Professor Ben Aaron, of the much-debated California bill to regulate public employee labor relations more extensively. The August 1975 decision not to bring the bill out of committee was said to reflect in part the public's distaste for legislative moves that might increase the clout of the government sector unions.
- The electorate's post-strike response to the San Francisco policemen and firemen's strikes. So vehement was the criticism of Mayor Joseph Alioto's arbitrary override of the city's Board of Supervisors on the strike settlement that Alioto himself has said ruefully that "labor-oriented candidates have no chance" to win in San Francisco this year.
- Neal Pierce, the television and newspaper commentator on state and local problems, has noted "the first signs that the spiralling wage and fringe-benefit demands of public employees can be curbed." Pierce cited the example of the reaction of numerous city mayors to the Seattle public's overwhelming support of Mayor Wes Uhlman when the firefighters' union leaders tried to have him fired by the public. **Source: Government Employee Relations Report, October 6, 1975**

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Education as a community concern

". . . goal setting is a method whereby the Board of Education seeks, through various methods of community involvement, to determine the long-range expectations of the local district . . . . there is no one right way to achieve community involvement in the goal-setting process . . . . a basic criterion for approval of the local district plan is that the Board of Education and professional staff seek the advice and counsel of the clients and publics of the district."

Guidelines for Local District Educational Planning
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

The school board is elected to represent the community in developing educational priorities and policies.

So why run to the community for advice on setting educational goals? After all, the typical layman knows nothing about education and that's why school boards hire professional staffs. Right?

Wrong. The attitude that the lay public should be kept out of educational decisions is wrong from both a philosophical and a practical standpoint.

There are several good reasons, in fact, why school officials should make a concerted effort to get the community involved in curriculum decisions:

1) Community involvement keeps the schools and the citizenry on the same wavelength. When all—or most—are working toward the same goals, the school board and superintendent are less likely to walk blindly into a buzz saw on controversial issues. Successful school-community harmonizing also provides a reservoir of goodwill that the district can call upon when the need arises. And the need invariably arises.
2) Educational policy should reflect what the community thinks. A school board can represent the *best* interests of the citizenry (or try to). But only in the smallest community can the board actually represent *all* of the interests. If the local citizens have no legitimate right to a voice in educational decisions, then there is no legitimate reason for having local school boards in the first place—except perhaps to hire the superintendent, approve the bills, and take the blame when things go wrong.
3) The state superintendent says you have to.

That last reason is not a very good one. Unfortunately, it is the only one that matters for some districts. It is popular to imagine that the layman has nothing to offer except petty gripes. Therefore, the less community involvement, the better. (See the article on page 26, in which Heller and Bedrosian report some pertinent research findings.)

Most research on the subject indicates that the lay community has minimal impact on curriculum decisions. This likely varies from district to district, but it does appear that the community asserts itself most often at the polls or when a controversial issue arises—like sex education.

School boards themselves are notoriously preoccupied with matters unrelated to the curriculum. (If you question that, look back at your last 12 board meeting agendas.)

Why—when the business of schools is education—is so little time devoted to educational matters? There is no single right answer to this question. But whatever the hang-up might be, it is a problem that only the board and administration can resolve.

Educational goal setting with community involvement is a golden opportunity.

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Illinois School Board Journal
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Superintendents and pressure groups

An uneasy truce

By O. T. BEDROSIAN and M. P. HELLER

The school superintendency rivals the college football coach as the most insecure form of employment in America.

While changing times generate the social pressures that lead to a rapid turnover in chief school administrators, the real problem frequently lies with the superintendent himself. In all likelihood, the fired superintendent carries within him the seeds of his own destruction.

Researchers have long held that the successful executive in education (or in any field, for that matter) is the one who possesses skills in the political arts—human relations, public relations, leadership, etc. A recent study, however, suggests that many superintendents have not acquired these skills.[1] While many of the superintendents interviewed in the study recognize the importance of community pressure groups, few have learned to work with such groups in any constructive way.

There are, of course, many types of superintendents. (See, for example, "What Kind of Administrator is Best for Your District?" by Jack E. Thomas, November-December, 1972 issue of *Illinois School Board Journal*.) There is the efficient decision maker who plunges ahead with only his own vast knowledge as a basis for decision making. He invariably runs blindly into one powerful pressure group or another. When the dust settles and he discovers he is unemployed, he may wonder for the rest of his life what it was that hit him.

Superintendents in the study have progressed beyond this point, for they at least recognize that pressure groups exist and that they must be dealt with. The question underlining most of their problems is this:

> *How does a superintendent work with pressure groups and still not compromise his own sense of what is right and wrong in education?*

A frequent answer to this question is simply to cope —to work around, over, and under such groups in a way that does the least damage to the educational program.

This is the second type of superintendent. He is the political strategist who attempts to neutralize pressure groups or to keep them happy with occasional concessions. He continues to make decisions with little community input, but retains some semblance of job se-

[1]"Community Pressures and Their Implications for the Leadership Role of Certain Superintendents in Lake County," O. T. Bedrosian. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Loyola University, June, 1972. Based on in-depth interviews of 22 district superintendents in northern Illinois.

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M. P. Heller is chairman of the department of educational administration, Loyola University, Chicago.

curity by pretending to listen and getting to know the right people.

Another type of superintendent is one who rolls with the tide. He is readily influenced by pressure groups. As a result, his decisions are helter-skelter, if he makes any at all. None of the superintendents surveyed fall into this category. In fact, there was a noticeable effort by most respondents to resist pressure group influence. In some cases, this was an over reaction.

What administrators and board members must come to realize is that sincere cooperation with community groups is essential to both community support for school programs and job security for the superintendent. Cooperation is more easily said than done, unfortunately, for it requires the acquisition of leadership skills and the changing of attitudes toward the role of the chief administrator.

How superintendents feel

Pressure groups, of course, are everywhere. There are the familiar, formal groups that are well organized and highly vocal. There also are the informal groups—like irate parents—which are not well organized but which can be highly vocal at times.

Formal pressure groups materialize for a variety of special interests, vigilante motivations, and specific dissatisfactions. Some groups are created by the school district as a means of obtaining community input. Many superintendents surveyed failed to distinguish between the narrow, self-interest group and the broadly representative citizens' groups.

How superintendents perceive such groups provides some insight into problems related to their own job insecurity.

Most superintendents interviewed in the study displayed awareness of the importance and the power that pressure groups wield. They even said that they saw a great need to communicate with such groups regularly. Although most respondents expressed a desire to work with such groups, there was frequent reference to the fear of losing control to them.

The study revealed that superintendents were receptive to the influence of organized pressure groups in matters of financial administration, but there was little receptivity in matters of program and personnel. Historically, community involvement in educational program development has been a "lip service" approach in many school districts. Present trends indicate, however, that superintendents are seeking the involvement of pressure groups when programs dealing with controversial subjects are contemplated.

One of the superintendents participating in this study stated during his interview: "An educational leader must make these pressure groups think they are really making a contribution without allowing them to dictate program development to the staff." Another felt that the important variable to consider is that these groups can be the superintendent's best vehicle in explaining the instructional program to the public. "Keep them on your side; it will pay dividends in the long run." An interesting strategy employed by one superintendent was to hold monthly open meetings in the community to discuss the programs of the school and seek volunteers to assist the staff in para-professional capacities.

Only one-third of the superintendents surveyed said that the schools belong to the people and that the voices of all groups should be heard.

There was a difference of opinion regarding the use of pressure groups in an advisory capacity, especially in matters of evaluating the curriculum. Approximately one-third of the superintendents stated that the schools belong to the people and, therefore, the voices of all groups should be heard and respected. The majority of the superintendents has a different point of view. One superintendent stated, "After all, I've got enough problems just getting my staff interested in curriculum work. Why cloud the issues further?" The fear was expressed that by allowing pressure groups to participate on the advisory level, they would soon try to exert a strong influence on decisions made. The key concerns were the limits placed on "advice," "counsel," and "evaluation."

A significant majority of the respondents felt that the job of evaluation was in the province of the board of education and its professional staff. Typical comments made during the interviews were: "evaluation is too important to place in the hands of lay citizens;" "the superintendent is asking for trouble if he uses that strategy;" "outsiders don't understand the many variables involved in evaluation;" "we have enough problems with teachers; this would only serve to make them more militant."

Many of the superintendents included in the sample had experienced attacks from pressure groups in mat-

ters of health, sex, and drug abuse programs. Each superintendent stated that he had not succumbed to the influence of pressure in determining the status of controversial subjects.

More than half the respondents indicated that community pressure group members really do not understand the total educational needs of children. There was agreement, however, that where the superintendent and board of education did not provide opportunities to allow some form of participation, future support from these groups could not be counted upon.

The study suggests that superintendents are giving additional attention to matters related to the community. Evidence points to the increasing involvement of school officials in the development of public relations programs.

Superintendents indicated that sincere effort should be made to seek the support and trust of community pressure groups, but in matters which would not negate the role of professional staff members. There is little doubt that the superintendents surveyed in this study are aware of the importance of the groups and the pressures they can bring to bear on the schools, yet only in a few cases was this fact regarded as the most important variable to be considered in the operation of the instructional program.

School organizations are attempting to give community groups a greater share in at least the advisory aspects of the instructional program, but even this type of involvement is unacceptable to the majority of superintendents surveyed.

What the study means

Although the study produced some hopeful signs of progress, it appears that the typical chief administrator still operates on a different wave length than the public in public education.

For the most part, superintendents appear to be either reluctant to deal with community groups or condescending when they do deal with them. Results of the study cited here cannot be assumed to automatically apply to all superintendents—or any other than those interviewed, for that matter. But the study should alert superintendents to the problems that they may be creating for themselves.

Also, school boards should be alerted. How the chief administrator views community pressure groups and how well he works with them should be factors in screening candidates and evaluating incumbents.

Moreover, the ability of an administrator to work

The superintendent's success in dealing with the community depends greatly upon the support he receives from his school board and the workability of board policies.

with the co[illegible]ty depends to a great extent upon:

1) The [illegible] of support he receives from his board;
2) The scope and the workability of written board policies.

Clearly, the board and administration have an educational job to do in clarifying—in written policy—the channels, procedures, and roles of community groups. Groups must understand, for example, that nothing is final or binding until approved by the board.

While school officials may fail to recognize the proper role of the public, the public is even less aware of such things as the legal structure of education and the role of the school board.

As for the superintendent, he should not discount the support that can be generated for school programs from community pressure groups. The literature has emphasized the need for greater participation of the community in school matters; it seems, however, that the administrators surveyed are not in agreement with this position. There is a lack of mutual trust and confidence which must be rekindled if significant inroads are to be made in the involvement of the public in educational decision-making. Superintendents and their staffs should strive for understanding the needs, aspirations, goals, and attitudes of all public bodies in their pursuit for educational quality. Past experiences which may have been negative should not necessarily cause school officials and boards of education to reflect attitudes of indifference or suspicion on the intents of community pressure groups. Issues should be judged on their merits and their potential for fostering better educational institutions.

The superintendent must be aware of the changing climate of most communities. The mobility of population, taxpayer concerns about costs of education, teacher militancy, and declining confidence in the benefits of schooling are causing a decrease in support for educational programs. Strategies which elicit community participation in school affairs can be effective means of changing this attitude to a more supportive role.

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September-October 1975

How much do people know about their schools?

By DOUGLAS HOEFT

If ever there were any doubts about the benefit of thorough newspaper coverage, those doubts have now been dispelled. At least in School District U46, Elgin.

A survey conducted last year among Elgin residents in District U46 showed a close relationship between the amount of knowledge people have on a particular subject and the amount of newspaper coverage on that subject. Newspapers, in other words, are extremely important in spreading school news—at least in this particular district.

However, the survey also revealed that the public knows very little about its school system. The public seemed reasonably well-informed only on items which had received extensive newspaper coverage during the previous twelve months. Even on those items, consistently accurate responses came only from those individuals who were parents of high school students, claimed to be voters, or had lived in the district for more than 10 years.

Purposes of the survey were to find out how much people know about their school system, to identify "information gaps," and to determine ways to increase the public's awareness. A questionnaire with 20 items was drafted by a panel of administrators, pre-tested on a group of residents, and finally used to poll 125 residents who were selected by a random sampling process. Telephone calls and a house-to-house canvas produced a response rate of 85.6 percent.

Questions and responses are presented in the Exhibit at right. Note that 80 percent of the respondents could not name the school board president and 61 percent could not name a single board member. However, 51 percent did know the name of the superintendent.

The average respondent recorded 7.36 correct answers out of a possible 20. Parents of school age children averaged 9.13 correct answers; non-parents averaged 6.36.

Elementary school parents averaged 7.24 correct answers, while high school parents averaged 10.70.

Respondents who said they were voters averaged 9.77 correct answers, while non-voters averaged 6.67.

Those who had lived in the district for more than 10 years ageraged 8.16 correct answers; shorter-term residents averaged 5.53.

Females averaged 7.48 correct answers; males averaged 7.40.

Respondents also were asked what they regarded as their primary source of school news:

- 12.4 percent said family and friends;
- 62.1 percent said the newspaper;
- 9.8 percent said principals and teachers;
- 6.5 percent said the radio;
- 7.2 percent said school district publications;
- 2.0 percent said school meetings.

Which of these sources of information proved most accurate? A tally of average scores for each source of news showed no significant differences, although the average score of those who relied on the radio station as a primary source was almost low enough to be significant.

District U46 has a School/Community Relations Department that issued 530 news releases during 1974. To see whether these releases were effective, we measured the amount of newspaper coverage of topics mentioned in the questionnaire. The 20 questions were ranked by the amount of news coverage they received during the previous year (measured in column inches). There was a significant correlation between the number of correct answers to each question and the amount of newspaper coverage found on that question. The conclusion was that the news releases had made significant contribution to the level of public awareness. Without thorough newspaper coverage, the public would probably know considerably less than it does about its schools.

Douglas Hoeft is a social studies teacher and coordinator of student activities at Elgin High School.

Elgin's questions and answers

Here are the 20 questions used in the survey of Elgin School District U46. Included are the multiple choice answers and the percentage of responses to each. The asterisk indicates the correct response.

____**1) Which one** of the following describes the size of the Elgin U46 Public Schools? A) It is one of the three largest in the State of Illinois, 35%* B) It is between the fourth and sixth largest in the State of Illinois, 18% C) It is between the seventh and fifteenth largest in the State of Illinois, 5% D) I do not know, 42%.

____**2) Does U46 bus** students from school to school to create a racial balance in its buildings? A) Yes, 13% B) No, 48%* C) Only in the City of Elgin, 2% D) I do not know, 37%.

____**3) Do the Elgin** high schools have an "open campus" policy allowing students to come and go when they have no classes? A) Yes, 51%* B) No, 4% C) One high school does and one does not, 19% D) I do not know, 26%.

____**4) Does the school** system have a student dress code to guide what is and is not allowed in clothing? A) Yes, 10%* B) No, 53% C) It depends on the policy of each school, 11% D) I do not know, 26%.

____**5) Which statement** describes the recent history of U46 bond issues? A) A bond issue for thirty million dollars was recently passed, 2% B) A thirty million dollar bond issue was defeated once, 19% C) A thirty million dollar bond issue was defeated twice, 50%* D) I do not know, 29%.

____**6) Which of these** statements best describes the U46 sex education courses? A) All students must attend them, 27% B) Students attend them with parental consent, 22%* C) The Board of Education banned all such programs, 1% D) I do not know, 50%.

____**7) Does the Elgin** District U46 have "model schools" which are financed by federal funds and are used as schools for experimental education? A) No, 8% B) Yes, there is one. 58%* C) Yes, there are a few, 7% D) I do not know, 27%.

____**8) Does U46 have** bilingual educational programs for all students who do not speak English? A) Yes, 28%* B) No, 13% C) No, but one will be established in the next six months, 8% D) I do not know, 51%.

____**9) Does the school** system allow students to individually set their curriculum and proceed at their own pace to finish course work? A) The system allows some teachers to encourage this, 31%* B) The system encourages all teachers to allow this. 12% C) No, 13% D) I do not know, 44%.

10) Please give the name of the President of the Elgin Board of Education. Please fill in his or her name. 20% named him, 80% could not.

11) Please give the name of the Superintendent of School District U46. Please fill in his or her name. 51% named him, 49% could not.

12) Would you please name as many Board of Education members as you can. 39% named at least one member, 61% could name no member of the school board.

____**13) Which of** the following is closest to the average cost of educating one student for one year in School District U46 ?A) $1100, 13%* B) $1400, 22% C) $1700, 13% D) I do not know, 52%.

____**14) Are all** students bused to Elgin schools? A) Yes, 2% B) No, 32% C) They are bused if they live over 1.5 miles from their schools, 51%*, D) I do not know, 15%.

____**15) Do the citizens** of Elgin have a group, the Citizens Advisory Council, that makes recommendations to the Board of Education on important issues? A) Yes, 51%* B) No, 2%, C) No, but one is in the process of being formed, 4%, D) I do not know, 43%.

____**16) What is** the level of the tax rate for School District U46? A) One of the highest in the state, 19%* B) About an average tax level for the state, 30% C) One of the lowest tax rates in the state, 4% D) I do not know, 47%.

____**17) Does Elgin** District U46 have a A) current operating debt, 10% B) current operating surplus, 9%, C) current balanced budget, 13%* D) I do not know, 68%.

____**18) Do the Elgin** high schools have study halls where attendance is required? A) Yes, 5%, B) No, 47%* C) One high school does and one does not, 14%. D) I do not know, 34%.

____**19) Can the Elgin** School Board build a new building in the district without voter approval? A) Yes, 14% B) No, 35%* C) Only if they have a surplus of funds, 8% D) I do not know, 43%.

____**20) Which of these** best describes how students in Elgin receive their books? A) The District supplies them for free, 7% B) The students buy them, 8% C) The students rent them, 63%* D) I do not know, 22%.

Putting survey results to work

Kathleen Woodman is director of school/community relations for School District U46, in Elgin. Asked for her reactions to the survey of public awareness, here is how she responded:

"This survey has taken the speculation out of what we *felt* to be true—that the better informed people are high school parents, voters, and long-term residents. Also, we now have statistical information showing that the parent is more informed than the non-parent, the voter more informed than the non-voter, and the long-term resident more informed than the resident living in Elgin under 10 years. I am surprised, however, that there is no significant difference between the mean score of males and females, having thought the female would be better informed on school matters.

"As to the question of whether some sources of school news are more accurate in transporting correct education news, it is interesting to note that there is no significant difference in the average scores of any group (except possibly the radio), especially those listing family and friends as

Survey results *continued*

primary sources of school news. Perhaps the "grapevine" is more accurate than we have been led to believe.

"As to the implications of this survey for our school/community relations programs: As part of our District Program Plan, we are developing a comprehensive plan for the orientation of new parents, students, teachers, and administrators. This survey indicates that we need to reach the new parent, who is often a recent move-in and a parent of an elementary student, as soon as possible. We feel that by contacting new parents early about school and district programs, we will be laying a solid foundation upon which further communications can be built.

"Also, as a result of this survey, we will be better able to pinpoint the areas of information that the various external publics need and want to know and from there build communication strategies for reaching them.

"Another significant part of the survey deals with what people perceive as their primary source of information about the schools. Eighty-four percent indicated that the newspaper is their first or second source of information about the schools and that their accuracy is high when correlated with what was printed in the newspaper. What concerns me is that the principal and teachers (the "school") ranked only third as a source of information. It is a concern because it is at the school where the most effective communication can take place—the two-way, face-to-face communication that builds understanding and support. Also, we feel we have about saturated our newspapers with news releases, most of which are used. While we hope to increase media coverage on certain policies, goals, programs, and so forth, we need more outlets for school news. The school is one of these outlets to which we have to direct more attention.

"One of our long-range goals in school-community relations is to increase the school's rank as a source of information. During the last two years we have had several public relations and communications workshops for principals in order to help them increase their skills in this area. This year we held a workshop deisgned specifically to improve building-level communications in which we included teams of administrators, teachers, and parents.

"One of our school-community relations goals in District U46 deals specifically with providing programs to increase the communications skills of administrators and staff. Based on the growing number of communications activities in our schools and departments, we feel we are well on our way to achieving this goal."

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Communications

Results

Two ways to resolve conflict: EXPOSE OR INVOLVE

By MICK HERZOG

Pressure on a board of education can be applied in many ways and in varying degrees of intensity.

Moreover, pressure can be applied as effectively by one person as by a large group. A letter to the editor written by a single individual is an example. A letter-writing campaign to the board is another. In neither is a face-to-face confrontation necessary to create an effect or to bring pressure on members of the board.

Another tactic is for the individual or group to make an appearance at a board meeting. In that situation, the board must deal with the pressure immediately. It must respond in some way, and often that response is impulsive and emotional and only increases the hostility of the group and, thus, the pressure on the board.

In dealing with the various kinds of pressure groups, the public relations philosophy of Niles Township High School District typically involves one of two strategies: involve them or expose them. For example:

• **In 1970,** the Niles Township Board of Education sought to remove two teachers of long tenure in the district for violation of a number of board policies. What took place during the drawn-out affair was almost unbelieveable —everything from sit-ins to bomb scares by students, screaming students and parents at board meetings, and all of it climaxed with a petition of more than 2,000 signatures calling for reinstatement of the two staff members. The board was under a great deal of pressure.

The board accepted the papers containing the 2,000 names, indicating it would consider the message contained in them and would respond at the next board meeting. For the next five days, a secretary and I telephoned randomly selected names from the petitions. Our purpose was not so much to determine if the names were legitimate as to determine why the individuals had signed the petition, and if they did so lacking sufficient information.

It worked. We found that 87 percent of the 200 people had signed not knowing the facts in the case, and sincerely desired more information. Moreover, there were 35 calls we couldn't make because the names were fictitious; there were several names of minors who had signed illegally, and several others were non-residents. That represented a 10 percent sampling of names. The board pondered the legitimacy of the other 90 percent.

The board used the results of the survey to justify publishing a series of information sheets to the entire community on the matter. A separate mailing went to names on the petitions. These publications were inexpensive, straight forward, honest, and written in layman's language from the point of view of a board member. The board, by exposing the facts in the case, exposed the pressure group for what it was: a very small but dedicated group of parents, students, and teachers who had covered the community asking almost anyone to sign a petition. By its next meeting, the board had received countless letters and phone calls expressing overwhelming support for its actions in the dismissal case.

• **A related experience** with an even larger pressure group took place a year later. Nearly 5,000 people jammed the Niles North High School after it was announced that the board was to vote on the superintendent's recommendation to lay off 47 teachers, almost 10 percent of the staff. The Board, despite the great pressure applied by the sheer number of people in the audience, voted to accept the dismissal recommendation. Now the pressure was on the teachers' representative—the Niles Township Federation of Teachers (Local 1274, AFL-CIO).

Flexing its muscles the next day, the union threatened to strike the schools unless the 47 teachers were reinstated.

Shortly thereafter, the board met to decide how it should deal with the crisis. The answer was the same as it was with the previous pressure group: expose them. Six times during the next two months, the board published informational reports—brief, to the point, factual, inexpensive, and each detailing the reasons for the layoffs (economic),

Mick Herzog is administrative assistant with Niles Township High School District 219.

as well as exposing the pressure group as a large block of teachers and spouses led by their union whose intefests were only for self and not for the community.

Armed with the facts, knowing why the 47 teachers had to be released, and learning that the educational program would not be affected as a result, the community deluged the board with a single message: "Stand tight." Ultimately, the strike threat was removed and things were back to normal in the Niles Township High Schools.

We also use the "expose them" philosophy when an individual throws some charges at the board through a letter to the editor in a local newspaper. I get the person's name, call him on the phone, and attempt to point out where the charges were in error or where information was lacking. If I still haven't convinced him of his errors, I then invite him to state his case to the board in an open meeting and offer time during the visitors spot on the agenda. Never would any member of the administration or board write a response to the letter for publication in the newspaper. Exposing an individual or group is better done face to face, in public, or in a medium such as a board newsletter—not through the newspapers.

The other half of the district's public relations philosophy towards pressure groups is to involve them. This method, I feel, is much sounder and more productive.

Suppose that one parent or student or a small group comes to a board meeting to complain about something. It might be the math program, or the music selection at a holiday concert. A school board's response might be: "We'll check into that," or, "We'll direct the administration to follow up." Likely as not, nothing is done, and some person who might have provided some excellent input into the solution of a problem goes away shaking his head in disgust.

The Niles Township Board has been using a different approach. For the past three years, any visitor to a board meeting, any individual who writes or calls the district office about a problem, or anyone who has a question is asked to become involved as a member of one of our more than 30 program advisory committees. These committees—which touch every aspect of the District's operation—provide invaluable input to the staff and serve as a ready information source to all other residents in the school community. Their names, addresses, and phone numbers are published

Why things happen that way

How is it that a citizen's committee—created by and responsible to—the board of education can sometimes come up with concrete proposals that the board just can't buy? It does happen, and frequently—despite the fact that both the board and the committee presumably reflect community sentiment.

There are some reasons for this which in some cases are so obvious as to defy detection.

1. Informed vs. Uninformed

A truly representative citizen's committee is no longer truly representative after it has been at work for awhile. Members of the committee have access to information and ideas that are not readily available to the average citizen. Thus, their **informed** viewpoints are almost certain to differ from **uninformed** viewpoints of the public at large.

There are a couple of preventive measures for this typical problem which can be taken up by the committee itself or by the school board working closely with the committee. One measure is to include public opinion feedback as one of the responsibilities charged to the committee, particularly if the topic under study is controversial. Another approach is to ensure that the general public has easy access to the same information provided to the citizen's committee.

2. Orientation to Task

When capable and energetic citizens take on a task, they generally become personally involved in the results. The longer they work at it, the more determined they become to identify the best possible solution to the assigned problem. If the best solution happens to be a Cadillac, no matter that the district can afford only a Datsun. Once the committee has identified the Cadillac as the best solution, it's job is done—unless the board has spelled out clearly all the criteria which the solution must meet.

This is one aspect of citizen's committee development that most district's stumble over. However, in a 1,000-word charge to its Citizen's Advisory Committee on School Building Needs, the school board of Riverton C.U. District 14 said that the committee should assist in "selecting the best of the alternative courses of action in terms of: a) that plan which is most conducive to the effective education of all pupils; b) that plan which enables the Board to meet requirements of the State of Illinois, and c) that plan which is most acceptable to District residents and the least objectionable financially."

Consequenly, although the committee became strongly oriented to the problem at hand, members understood the parameters of what would be considered an acceptable solution. While a board of education is responsible for everything in the distict, a committee of citizens assigned to a special problem very readily narrows its sights to just that problem. They must be encouraged in the original charge to view the problem in somewhat the same way the board must—as a part of a larger picture.

Contact the IASB Springfield office for a copy of the Riverton School Board charge to its citizen's committee.

— GRG

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Developments in Personnel Management
November 1976

Gallup reports on collective bargaining and schools

How do people feel about collective bargaining and education? That's what the Gallup organization set out to find . . . and here's what they found:

A plurality of all citizens opposes permitting teacher to strike, but the margin of those opposing striking to those favoring striking has decreased in recent years.

In the first survey in this series (1969), the public, by a small margin, said that teachers should be permitted to join labor unions, but opposed the right to strike by 59 percent to 37 percent.

In the years since, more teachers have joined teacher associations and unions, and strikes have, likewise, increased.

Today, a plurality of all citizens in this sample still opposes the right to strike. The margin is 48 percent to 45 percent, and important differences in the totals are found by age groups, by education, and by community size.

A large majority of all major groups in the population favors settling teacher union-board disputes by compulsory arbitration.

The question of whether principals should be regarded as a part of management or as employees – and therefore, with an employee's right to strike – is not really an issue insofar as the general public is concerned. Principals are a part of management, in their view.

Eight in every 10 persons in the sample say principals are a part of management; only one in nine holds an opposing view. **Source: Educators Negotiating Service, August 1, 1976.**

Bargaining and local control

Reprinted from
Developments in Personnel Management
February 1977

When New York City faced a financial crisis, some wags suggested giving the city back to the Indians. Michael Kirst has come up with a similar solution for the crisis in public education – give each school back to the parents, teachers, students, and taxpayers most concerned about it. School board members ought to be elected by and for the districts they represent rather than at large, Kirst says. From his experience as a member of the California State Board of Education and as a Stanford University professor specializing in school governance, he makes the following suggestions on collective bargaining:

- "There must be no binding arbitration, because both sides must recognize that they have something to gain and something to lose from the bargaining process."
- "State law should not mandate teacher tenure, but leave it to local bargaining. States should also give locals a freer hand in hiring personnel by loosening certification regulations."
- "State laws specifying the length of the school year should either be eliminated or relaxed. Under present law, teachers know that any salary they lose during a strike will be made up at the end of the school year."
- "States should open some parts of the bargaining to the public through open meetings for public reactions to the proposals of labor and management. States should not intervene in local disputes by using the governor as mediator or arbitrator."
- "Many areas of school policy that are usually negotiated centrally – areas beyond the scope of wages and fringes – can be reserved for bargaining at the school site."

Changes should be phased in, he says. They would result utimately in a changed role for the school principal, who would become more like the English headmaster, with much more influence over budget matters. **Source: Nation's Schools Report, January 3, 1977.**

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Information for decision-making:

How to get it . . . . how to use it

By ALLEN KLINGENBERG and JAMES CIMFEL

There is nothing so reassuring to the manager of any organization than the knowledge that decisions are being made in an objective manner based upon relevant data.

For school boards, the decision-making process depends upon data gathered from a variety of sources. Some information coming to the board is very objective and "provable." Some is totally subjective, even intuitive.

What is needed in a public school district is an "information system" for collecting the most verifiable data available regarding both day-to-day operations and major school board policies.

Numerous school systems across the country have recognized the need for a systematic means of collecting information for use in decision making. How they actually collect and use information runs the gamut from the highly sophisticated to the sporadic and just plain accidental. Moreover, much of the data gathered appears to be totally useless. Clearly, information systems are poorly developed in public education.

School managers need not, however, allow decisions based upon a series of crises to determine the destiny of their districts. It does not take much effort to see the nerve-racking and potential disasters involved when the school system moves from one crisis to another. Crisis management is a necessary skill of every school manager, but when it becomes his primary style, it is a clear sign of deep-seated, underlying organizational problems.

Aren't there some things you'd like to know about what your school system is doing . . . and how well?

Just as there are a variety of routes one can travel from Springfield to Chicago, there are a variety of ways a successful management team can develop a "management information system." Vital to the success of any systematic information system in public education is the degree to which it is planned and integrated into the total management operation. Management information provides a basis for program evaluation and for subsequent decisions based on that evaluation.

What specific types of information provide an adequate foundation for evaluation and decision making? Lake Forest Elementary School District 67 has implemented a management system that may offer some answers.

Recognizing that the school district is accountable to the taxpaying residents of the community, District 67 provided Lake Forest residents on two separate occasions with opportunities to voice their opinions on the total operation of their elementary schools. The first opportunity came following a referendum defeat in 1971, when the Board of Education and the district's Association of Parents and Teachers joined forces in a study of community opinion. Working closely with Value Standards, Inc., a Chicago-based management consulting firm, a comprehensive survey of the District 67 school system was conducted. (See the September-December, 1973, issue of this *Journal* for a comprehensive report on the survey: "How Do Your Voters Rank Your District's Priorities?".)

As a follow-up to this survey, all

Allen Klingenberg is superintendent of Lake Forest Elementary District 67. James Cimfel is his administrative assistant for instruction.

LAKE FOREST SURVEY RESULTS

A comparison of how parents rated various programs, services, and activities in 1972 and 1974.

Item	Spring 1972 Adequate	Spring 1972 Inadequate	Spring 1974 Adequate	Spring 1974 Inadequate	Spring 1974 No Opinion
1. Administrative Performance	80	20	89	7	4
2. Public Information Program	81	19	93	6	1
3. Parent-Administrator Communication	62	38	91	7	2
4. Bus Services	77	23	75	19	6
5. Lunch Program	88	12	87	7	6
6. Reading	77	23	92	3	5
7. Mathematics	85	15	87	9	4
8. Science	90	10	86	7	7
9. Social Studies	87	13	89	4	7
10. Language Arts	82	18	84	8	8
11. Provide Individual Attention	68	32	82	14	4
12. Parent-Teacher Communication	64	36	95	4	1
13. Discipline Standards	63	37	85	11	4
14. Reporting Pupil Progress	74	26	90	5	5
15. Media Centers	92	8	92	2	6
16. Program Provides Opportunities to Develop Uniqueness	69	31	85	9	6
17. Instill Learning Process	66	34	83	13	4

parents of children enrolled in District 67 schools were invited to respond to a second questionnaire two years later. This document was designed to solicit parental input in four specific categories. The first section sought reactions to items having total district significance. Items ranged from the degree to which the Board of Education acts in the best interests of the students to the adequacy of bus services and the lunch program.

The second portion of the survey focused more specifically on individual schools within the district. Parents were asked to respond to such items as: "My child likes school this year" and "This school is helping my child develop self-respect and respect for others." Some other items solicited responses to amounts of homework, emphasis on basic skills development, report cards, and discipline standards.

Parents were asked to name those specific aspects which they like best and/or least about the school system in the third portion of the questionnaire.

The final portion of the questionnaire asked parents to comment on the overall performance of their children's teachers in seven specific areas of competence: 1) presents subject matter clearly; 2) maintains discipline; 3) motivates and encourages students; 4) communicates effectively with parents; 5) establishes realistic standards of achievement; 6) emphasizes basic skill development; and 7) plans appropriate assignments for individual children.

A number of changes in district operations were made as a direct result of the findings of the first survey. Two years later, the second survey provided some enlightening insights into the impact of these changes. (See table above.) For example:

1) In 1972, 81 percent felt that the district's public information program was adequate; 19 percent

A 1972 survey uncovered some problems. A repeat survey in 1974 measured progress toward solving them.

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indicated it was inadequate. As a result, the district employed a part-time public relations officer, and started both a bi-weekly column in the local newspaper and a bi-monthly newsletter for all Lake Forest residents. Two years later, 93 percent of the parents felt that the public information program was adequate.

2) **In 1972, more than** one-third of the parents polled felt that parent-teacher communication was not adequate. Only 74 percent felt that methods for reporting pupil progress were adequate. Board, staff, and parent-teacher committees began to study these problems. Alternative methods for parent-teacher conferences were offered for the first time on a district-wide basis. Pupil progress report forms were revised and added at some levels. Two years later, favorable responses to these same questionnaire items jumped to 95 percent and 90 percent, respectively.

3) **In 1972, only 68 percent** of the parents saw District 67 schools as providing adequate individual attention to students. After developing well-equipped and well-staffed media centers in all buildings, and providing inservice training and courses aimed at increasing individualized instruction, the percentage of parents responding positively to this item grew to 82 percent.

Other categories in which parents responded substantially higher on the second survey were: quality of reading instruction, discipline standards, instilling the learning process, and administrative performance. In all cases, the district made specific changes relating to these areas during the two-year interim.

It should be evident that community residents, particularly parents of childen enrolled in a school system, provide school officials with a valuable source of information. Another source of information often overlooked by school district managers is that of staff personnel.

An "Organizational Climate Questionnaire" was developed to give the total certificated staff of District 67 a chance to voice their feelings on a multitude of topics relating to the school district. Through this device, the staff provided the management team with an overall "image" of district-wide and individual building operations.

These categories of information were generated at the district level: district organization, superintendent, the Board of Education. Within the first category of district organization, staff evaluated such items as district-wide inservice and program coordination and teacher involvement in district decision making. The overall responses to statements within this category provided another piece of pertinent data for the board and school managers to use in future planning.

Teachers were asked to rate the performance of the school board and superintendent.

Many of the items on the "Organizational Climate Questionnaire" dealt with operations within individual buildings, particularly principal-staff relationships. These results provided direction for the respective building principals as they met individually in the spring with the superintendent to develop their personal goals for the next school year.

Among the most vital ingredients of management information are those which help evaluate staff performance. A comprehensive system of staff appraisal begins with the premise that supervision and evaluation are essential to the continued professional development of staff and the improvement of instruction.

In District 67, four basic components produce information used jointly by individual teachers and their building principals. These components are: 1) a classroom performance checklist; 2) an overall professional performance checklist; 3) progress toward goals mutually determined by the teacher and principal; and 4) student and parental feedback. An overall assessment of teacher performance is made annually through the information generated from these four sources. This staff evaluation program is reviewed in some detail in the November-December, 1974, issue of this *Journal* as part of a Pathfinder Report on Performance Evaluation.

Stated briefly:

- **The classroom and overall** performance checklists, developed by a committee of teachers and administrators, provide bases for the

School supplies? No, that's just our monthly supply of report forms for the state Office of Education.

principal and teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance. A checklist provides a basis for discussion.

• **Goals for improved** performance are developed jointly by each teacher in individual consultation with the principal. They enable the teacher and principal to monitor progress toward correcting weaknesses and building on strengths.

• **Questionnaires filled** out by parents and students provide the teacher with an "image profile." Experience shows that this information often substantiates data gathered through other sources. More importantly, this input lets each teacher see what parents and pupils think and to make any desirable adjustments.

Building principals and central management personnel also are evaluated in District 67. An "Administrative Image Questionnaire" consists of 25 competencies which are ranked from "poor" to "excellent." Ability to motivate others, decision-making ability, fairness, and innovativeness are examples from this questionnaire.

For each building principal, the evaluation instrument is completed by himself, his building staff, other district administrators, and the superintendent. Central administrative personnel are evaluated by the identical sources with the exception of building staff.

All of the data is tabulated, charted, and analyzed. Using the bulk of this information as a basis for discussion, the superintendent meets individually with each district administrator. This final evaluation conference also includes discussion of personal goals. Revised goals for the succeeding year are generated at this conference for each member of the administrative staff. Each of these goals, of course, is closely allied with district goals and objectives as determined by the Board of Education in conjunction with the superintendent.

To complete the evaluation process in District 67, the superintendent meets with the Board of Education in late spring to assess the degree to which he has attained his own goals mutually determined with the board the previous year. Also used at this time is the data generated from the administrative staff's evaluation of the superintendent.

Another source of management information used in District 67 is a standardized student achievement testing program. A two-phase testing program provides data not only on what students know in specific areas, but also how much they have learned during each school year.

All students in grades 1-8 are tested in the fall using the 1973 Revised Stanford Achievement Test. In May, using a different form of that same test, each student is tested again. The grade level achievement of fall and spring tests are compared through grade equivalent or scaled scores, and the amount of growth which has taken place during the school year becomes readily observable.

Careful analysis of achievement testing growth scores may identify some areas where additional emphasis needs to be placed and programs modified.

It should be obvious that the processes involved in appraising a school district should be comprehensive and involve a variety of data sources. The board of education, the superintendent, the administrative and teaching staff, parents and other community residents, and the children themselves, all provide information on which valid decisions can be based.

The strength of the Lake Forest management system lies in the integration of the various components which make up the system. That is, the management by objectives program doesn't exist separately from the management information or personnel component. All components exist because of their contribution to achieving the overall purposes of the organization.

. . . and then I looked 'em in the eye and said, 'I've been superintendent here for 15 years; no money-hungry teachers union is going to tell me . . .'

Reprinted from the
Illinois School Board Journal
May–June 1973

Some channels for community input to the educational process

Schools get community input all of the time. But it comes in bits and pieces from individuals with gripes and axes to grind and rarely presents an accurate picture of what the community as a whole really thinks.

In order to involve citizens in developing educational goals in a way that accurately reflects community sentiment, it is necessary to determine:

a) How many people do we have to hear from? Do these people represent a cross section of all our district residents? Where are these people and how do we identify them?

b) Do we want these people to give us new ideas regarding curriculum goals? Or do we want their reactions to ideas developed by the staff?

The answer to the first question establishes the authenticity of the project. Input from the community's college graduates or those who are well-connected is not indicative of what the entire community thinks. Selecting individuals who are most vocal or articulate is not necessarily accurate either.

Differences in socio-economic status, race, religion, age, and sex make a difference in how people view the goals of education. School officials must plan their program for community involvement accordingly. (The impact of most biases can be balanced out by randomly selecting a proportionate number of individuals from each school attendance area. Certainly that process is far better than selecting only those individuals who are free to attend meetings on Tuesday afternoons.)

Most school districts probably will involve the community in evaluating proposed goals and objectives developed by the staff. Others—a few at least—will try to involve citizens in drafting the goals. Both approaches have merit. In fact, a combination of the two might be the best.

Obviously, it would be a mistake to turn a citizen task force loose with no guidance at all and expect a worthwhile set of educational goals to result. A better suggestion would be to combine citizen and staff membership on the goal writing task force. This should prevent either the community group or the staff from moving too far afield of one another. The end result—hopefully a set of proposed goals—could then be reviewed by the entire staff and community.

Once school officials have determined a clear purpose for community input it is time to decide just how such input will be obtained.

There are at least three avenues for getting the community viewpoint, any one of which can be made to work but none of which works without a modest amount of effort.

Hearings. Public hearings have not been particularly popular in education circles, except for the past few

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Five steps to a community involvement project

Step 1: Determine where community input will fit into the picture. In setting educational goals, will citizens help in writing the goals? Or will they evaluate staff-written goals? Or will they serve as a sounding board or as a source of ideas before goal writing begins?

Step 2: Select the process that seems to be most appropriate. Should you use citizens' advisory committees, hearings, or surveys? The answer will depend partly on how the input is to be used, as determined in Step 1. It also will depend partly upon the size of the community and the diversity of its make-up, as well as the capabilities and interests of the professional staff.

Step 3: Determine who can speak for the community. Will you try to hear from everyone? Or will you select a representative cross section of people?

Step 4: Set up a structure involving board, administration, and faculty to see the project through. Work carefully with your advisory groups, hearings, or surveys so that the results will bear on the issue at hand—the development of educational goals.

Step 5: Report back to the community. Even citizens who did not take part ought to be informed of the nature of the input obtained from those who did, the staff's interpretation of the input, and the conclusions or decisions finally reached.

Reprinted from the
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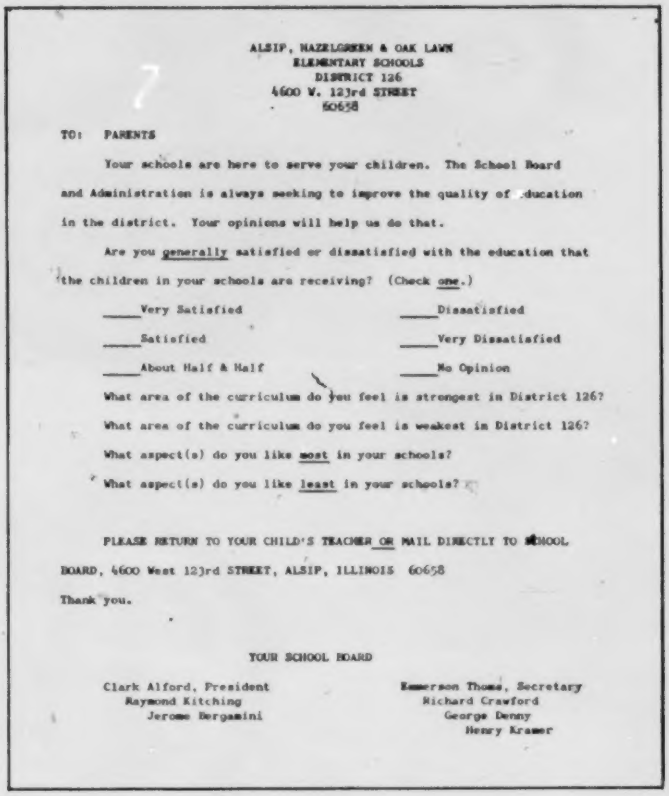
July–August 1970

For Better Schools

Get the Parent Viewpoint



ALSIP, HAZELGREEN & OAK LAWN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
DISTRICT 126
4600 W. 123rd STREET
60658

TO: PARENTS

Your schools are here to serve your children. The School Board and Administration is always seeking to improve the quality of education in the district. Your opinions will help us do that.

Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the education that the children in your schools are receiving? (Check one.)

_____Very Satisfied _____Dissatisfied

_____Satisfied _____Very Dissatisfied

_____About Half & Half _____No Opinion

What area of the curriculum do you feel is strongest in District 126?

What area of the curriculum do you feel is weakest in District 126?

What aspect(s) do you like most in your schools?

What aspect(s) do you like least in your schools?

PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER OR MAIL DIRECTLY TO SCHOOL BOARD, 4600 West 123rd STREET, ALSIP, ILLINOIS 60658

Thank you.

YOUR SCHOOL BOARD

Clark Alford, President
Raymond Kitching
Jerome Bergamini

Emmerson Thome, Secretary
Richard Crawford
George Denny
Henry Kramer

A simple but effective means for keeping schools and parents on the same wavelength has been devised by the District 126 Board of Education (Alsip, Hazelgreen and Oak Lawn Elementary Schools) in south suburban Cook County.

The district in 1964 developed an easy-to-use questionnaire, which has been distributed to the parents of all 2,500 pupils three times in the ensuing six years.

Superintendent William Smith suggests that "this is an easy and fast way to find out just how parents feel about the job the schools are doing. It also helps pinpoint the areas most liked and disliked."

Among other benefits, the questionnaire provides the school with proof of parent support.

"Knowing this support is present has helped the school board in the successful passage of six consecutive building bond issues," points out Clark Alford, board president.

The questionnaire is sent home with the students and returned either to the teacher or mailed directly to the school board. The return has ranged from 40 to 80 per cent. The 1969 questionnaire brought more than 2,000 written comments.

To some extent, of course, the board is sticking its neck out by asking parents what they dislike and by encouraging suggestions for change. So far, however, only four per cent of the parents have expressed dissatisfaction. Moreover, Superintendent Smith points with some pride to a long list of worthwhile ideas generated by the questionnaire and implemented by the schools. For example:

- Teachers now take more initiative in contacting parents before problems get out of hand, because they learned that parents want closer communications.
- Bus routes in one area were changed to correct a recurring problem.
- A parental "split" over the new math program was brought to the district's attention. (New math ranked first as what parents liked most and fourth as what they liked least.)
- Math workshops for parents were scheduled.
- Concern over excessive homework resulted in the development of "homework guidelines."
- Parental concern over discipline resulted in strengthened discipline procedures.
- Intramural and intrascholastic programs at the junior high school were expanded.

In addition, the questionnaire responses have strengthened the district's grouping procedures and encouraged it to continue its sex education program.

Staff awareness of "parental feelings" has been a further benefit, says Mr. Smith.

What the public thinks about education . . .

An Illinois survey reveals public and educator attitudes on a variety of topics.

A sizeable majority of Illinois' general public believes that schools are doing a good or even excellent job. A similar majority rates education as one of the most important concerns for government, second only to the question of health care.

These public opinions were disclosed by the University of Illinois Survey Research Laboratory and State Superintendent Michael J. Bakalis last May. The survey firm was commissioned to do the study by the state education office.

Other important findings listed by Bakalis were:

1) **The general public** in Illinois believes a greater portion of school costs should be paid by the state —but a majority of the public is unwilling to pay for the increased cost through higher state taxes.

2) **The general public** believes that confidential student files should be open to parents only, and even students should be denied access to the records. Teachers, principals and superintendents don't believe that students or parents should have access to the students' files.

3) **Four out of five** teachers believe the state legislature should pass a bill providing uniform procedures allowing teachers to join together for collective bargaining. Teachers agree generally that there is no sex prejudice in salaries, but 46 percent of the teachers questioned said they believed there is sex prejudice in job assignment.

4) **Adults and students** surveyed agreed that the most important goal for education should be "to encourage a positive attitude toward learning."

5) **Ninety-five percent** of all persons surveyed concerning the major goals of OSPI's *Action Goals for the Seventies* considered each of the goals either very important or somewhat important.

6) **Respondents** generally agreed that if more money is to be allocated in any given program area, it should go to career and vocational education programs.

7) **Only one-fourth** of the general public, one-half of the opinion leader group and two-thirds of the teacher group had ever heard of the State Board of Education. But, 42 to 85 percent of those that had heard of the board believed the change to an appointed state superintendent was a good idea.

8) **Involvement** by all segments of the community in the local school system is at the very heart of Illinois' public school system, and is a principle on which nearly everyone agrees.

The survey contains a broad range of findings about public attitudes toward education on specific and general questions. The survey is the first of its kind in the state and its purpose is to provide Bakalis' office and the new State Board of Education with information useful in assessing strengths and weaknesses of the present educational system. Results will be used to test old assumptions about education and to re-evaluate roles of students, parents, teachers, school boards, administrators and the state education office.

The survey gathered opinions from the following

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Jessica Weber is a public information officer in the Illinois Office of Public Instruction, Springfield.

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September-October 1974

By JESSICA WEBER

. . . and how you can find out in your district

School boards hear frequently from the minority. Some use surveys to learn what the majority thinks.

Who should have a voice in how a school district is run?

Most people in education circles these days agree that the whole community has a stake in its educational system and a right to be heard.

The question now being explored is: How can a board of education "hear" a mixed and constantly changing chorus of voices? Even more difficult, how can a board "hear" those persons who don't speak up at all?

Many school districts are finding the answer in the public opinion survey.

A comprehensive attitudinal survey recently taken for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction sampled the opinions of students, parents, educators, and community members throughout the state. The result was a mass of information that probably could not have been obtained in any other way.

The results of the survey (see adjacent stories for some of the results) will be used by the state education office to supplement information gleaned from hearings on the publication *Action Goals for the Seventies.*

Local school districts can do the same thing on a smaller scale, testing community opinion on specific financial and educational questions, or gathering attitudinal information to be used in charting the overall direction of an educational program.

"I feel very emphatically that the decision-making shouldn't be limited to the school board, which is elected by 10 percent of the registered voters," said Polly Carithers, director of public information for the Oakland Schools, in Michigan. In her job for this county service unit, Ms. Carithers has helped the 28 school districts direct surveys of all kinds.

Usually, Ms. Carithers said, about 85 percent of the people in a school district are satisfied with the school system in general. School board members hear from the other 15 percent.

"I've seen school boards jettison good programs on the basis of what they hear at a board meeting. The people there are not representative. They talk loudly and say 'we are the tip of the iceberg.' Are they or not? A survey will show that," she said.

Following are three Illinois school districts that have surveyed their populations in various ways and for various purposes. All three districts have found the survey a valuable tool and plan to use it again.

Decatur District 61 has in the past two years done an extensive survey in preparation of its program plan, a smaller mail-out survey on a specific question, and a telephone survey to gauge the effectiveness of its information program.

Charles Skibbens, administrative assistant for the district, feels "this is the way to go. I really believe all that theory about schools belonging to the people, and I'd like to see more input from the rank and file voter on year-round school or drug education programs."

Decatur has done all its surveys without outside help.

The comprehensive survey done last year went to 5,000 parents, 600 teachers, most of the district's administrators, and a group of students. It covered a range of sub-

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What the public thinks

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groups: teachers, school board members, administrators (superintendents and principals), public opinion leaders, students, and the public generally.

The "opinion leaders" were persons judged to be active in school affairs.

All respondents, except students, were interviewed on the telephone by personnel trained by the survey firm. Students were surveyed in written questionnaires.

Nearly 5,000 persons were asked about 50 questions during a three-month period. The massive data were then compiled, analyzed and summarized by Survey Research Laboratory. Questions touched on subjects ranging from curriculum, school finance and school facilities to how well schools, school boards, administrators and teachers are doing their jobs. It asked questions about the roles and performance of the state education office and the state superintendent, and it probed public knowledge of the new State Board of Education.

The information has been presented to the State Board of Education, including the finding that 75 percent of the general public and 50 percent of the opinion leader group had not heard of the new board.

Bakalis said the survey marks an extension of his office's practice for the last three and one half years of communicating with the public about education and providing mechanisms for the public to help set new goals, priorities and directions for schools. "This information will provide my office and the State Board of Education with a framework for incorporating public attitudes in educational planning for some time to come," Bakalis said.

He said his administration has maintained communication with thousands of citizens about major educational questions through regularly scheduled public hearings. But he said the hearings had to be accompanied by a more scientific and controlled sampling of public opinion because "hearings too often attract only those with special interests and therefore preconceptions about schools and educators. The scientific survey mitigates this type of automatic bias and augments what we find through regular hearings," Bakalis said.

Evaluation of educators

Students and the public generally gave similar responses when asked to rate the job being done by schools, school boards, administrators and teachers. A majority of the students and the public said they believe schools, their leaders, and employees are doing a good or better job. The tendency was for those who have the most responsibility for running schools to give higher marks to schools for a job well done.

Making up the overall positive response toward schools were the following percentage responses by each group: superintendents, 98.9; principals, 97.9; school board members 95.7; teachers, 88.6; public opinion leaders, 83.6; the general public, 67; and students, 66.8.

The same respondents were asked to rate how they believed teachers, administrators and school boards were doing their jobs. Teachers fared the best with 74 percent (average) of all replies saying teachers are doing either a good or excellent job.

School board member and administrator (including principals and superintendents) responses to these questions tended to indicate the two groups have mutual reservations about the job the other is doing. Yet, both groups generally replied that teachers are doing good jobs. In no case did one group say the other was doing less than good or excellent overall.

Public opinion leaders' responses followed the same pattern as school members and administrators when asked to rate the jobs of the same three categories. The opinion leaders placed each group in the good to excellent category by the following percentages: teachers, 83.9; administrators, 74.8; and school board members, 74.7.

Teachers placed school boards and administrators in the good to excellent category by the respective percentages of 64.2 and 75.5.

The general public category rated school boards, administrators, and teachers to be doing good to excellent in their jobs by the following respective percentages: 66, 64.6, and 70.2. For the same respective categories, students gave the following responses: 49, 58.4 and 71.2 percent.

The same groups of respondents, except students, were asked to select from seven areas of concern for state government which area they considered to be the most important. Education was named second most important, just behind health concerns, by the general public category, but ranked even higher among those who work for schools.

The seven categories in the order of their ranking by six adult groups are: health, education, natural resources, economic growth and economic control, public safety, public aid and welfare, and transportation.

In relation to the other six areas of concern, education was considered most important by teachers (63.5 percent), school board members and administrators (69 percent), and public opinion leaders (52.6 percent).

The respondents were asked to rank the areas of governmental concern according to the following ratings: very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important.

The general public ranked education as very important by a huge majority of 91 percent, but since the public rated more than one area of concern as very important, respondents were asked to make a choice among these. Health was first with 33.1 percent, and education was second with 30.8 percent.

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jects ranging from broad issues like discipline and busing to specific programs. Results were tabulated on the district's own computers.

Such a survey is time-consuming, Skibbens said, but he still feels it's much cheaper for the district to do it alone.

Most recent was a telephone survey taken last spring. Pulling every 20th telephone number from its files, the district came up with 1,000 numbers. A group of adult and high school student volunteers made the calls, using a script, and found an overwhelming number of rspondents favored the district's communications program which uses radio, television, and a newsletter.

A mail survey done in December, 1972, resulted in the district building a new high school instead of renovating an old one, and may have been a factor in passing a bond issue referendum. The school board had been leaning toward renovating the old building on the basis of what it heard at meetings, but the five-question survey mailed to every 40th name on the voter registration polls showed the population strongly in favor of building a new high school.

Alsip, Hazelgreen and Oak Lawn Elementary District 126 has done three surveys since 1967 and plans another next year, according to Raymond J. Garritano, assistant superintendent.

"I don't know how administrators can have a true picture of what their constituents feel without a survey," Garritano said.

Rather than surveying the district through a sampling, District 126 surveys all parents by sending questionnaires home with students and collecting them in class. Recently, the district overwhelmingly passed a bond referendum.

District 126 surveys cost time and "a little bit of paper," said Garritano. Administrators write questions, then circulate them among teachers, principals, and board of education members. The questions are refined, questionnaires are mimeographed and sent home with students, and the students return the questionnaires to school.

As for the results, Garritano finds that most people are satisfied with the district and "generally, the things they are concerned with, we are concerned with, too."

Olympia Unit District 16 recently conducted a comprehensive survey of every home in the district as part of a Title III, ESEA, project

Goals of education

What should be the most important goal of public education?

"To encourage a positive attitude toward learning" was rated first overall by students and adults.

The same groups rated "providing students with opportunities to express their creativity" as the least important goal.

The interviewees, who represented the general public, public opinion leaders, school board members, school administrators, teachers, and students, were asked to rate the nine substantive goals listed in OSPI's **Action Goals for the Seventies** in order of importance. Ninety-five percent of the respondents in each group considered each of the goals either "very" or "somewhat" important.

The same group of respondents was asked whether school districts should spend more or less money on each of 10 programs.

"Career and vocational education" was rated as the most deserving of more money.

(Students were asked not whether more or less money should be spent on the programs, but how worthwhile they considered the program. "Career and vocational education" still was rated first by students.

The goals "mastering the basic skills" and "providing equal educational opportunities" tied for second place on an overall basis.

However, programs in reading, writing, and arithmetic—generally considered "basic skills"—were rated third by the general public, and no higher than fifth by any other group, as being worthy of more money.

Within the overall ratings of goals, some interesting differences of opinions among the various respondent groups appeared, usually showing differences between student and adult groups, or professional and lay groups.

Although the goal "providing students with opportunities to express their creativity" was rated lowest overall, students gave it a rating of 4.5, the same rating they gave to the first-place "encourage a positive attitude toward learning."

Adult groups rated this goal in eighth or ninth place, suggesting students consider creativity more important than do their elders.

When asked to rate programs by their worth, however, students gave "artistic and creative programs" only eighth place, while adult groups listed it in third to sixth place, in terms of whether more money should be spent on it.

"Providing equal educational opportunities for everyone", the goal that tied for second place in overall ratings, got a range of ratings from different groups: it was listed first by the student group, tied for first place

HERE'S HELP

For school districts considering attitudinal surveys in their own communities, a number of sources of help are available. An organization that is equipped to handle all aspects of surveying and analysis is the Survey Research Laboratory, University of Illinois, 414 David Kinley Hall, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Materials which the Survey Research Lab used in the statewide study for the Office of Public Instruction are available from the Research Section, OSPI, 216 East Monroe, Springfield, Illinois 62706. Of most value would be the use of the same survey questions. Also, school officials can obtain expert advice from OSPI on all aspects of survey research by writing to Sally Pancrazio, director of research, at the above address.

How to find out *continued*

"Opportunities in Rural Consolidation." District 16 was formed eight years ago by the consolidation of eight small districts and is in the third year of this Title III project.

One aspect of the project was to determine the educational expectations of the citizens of the district, said Superintendent Douglas Blair. With the help of consultants from Illinois State University, a citizens' advisory committee developed questions. Survey booklets were printed and training sessions were held for interviewers.

The survey included both attitudinal and statistical information. No census-type information was available for the district because it includes parts of several counties, so that information was gathered through the survey. Questions also were included to learn citizens' attitudes toward existing programs and services and what they expected from the district.

The survey showed more than 80 percent responding were "well-pleased," Blair said. "I was glad it was over 50 percent," he added.

Blair thinks surveys such as this one give voters "the feeling that you don't come to them only when you want to pass a referendum, but that you really want to know how they feel about things."

Learning that people are satisfied with the district is a common result of surveying, Ms Carithers finds.

"The population is a lot friendlier to schools than some administrators and board members believe," she said. The feedback a board member gets without help of surveys is "wildly distorted," she said.

There is, of course, the possibility that that a survey will reveal dissatisfaction. A district that conducts a survey should be aware of that possibility and be prepared to make changes if necessary.

"If you ask something, it's sort

GOALS *continued*

among the general public, and was rated fourth by teachers, principals and superintendents.

Although "career and vocational programs" were listed top in terms of worth and of whether more dollars should be spent on them, the goal of "providing opportunities for training for future work" was rated only eighth by teachers and ninth by principals.

Students considered the goal more important, giving it a second place rating, and the general public gave it a medium rating of fifth.

"Providing students with experience to encourage them to be good citizens" was rated the least important goal by students, but adult groups listed it in third to fifth place.

In the listing of programs that should receive more money, "social studies" was rated last by all groups except principals, who gave it eighth place.

"Mathematics" drew a wide range of ratings, in terms of worth and whether more money should be spent on it. Students gave it second place, the general public, seventh; teachers and superintendents, ninth; school board members and public opinion leaders, eighth; and principals, tenth. "Science" also drew a range of ratings, from second place by school board members to seventh place by superintendents and students.

Students and adult groups also differed on "physical health and recreation programs." Students rated those as third in importance; superintendents, sixth; and other adult groups, seventh or eighth.

Students put "extracurricular activities" in fourth place, while adult groups rated it eighth and ninth.

Only principals, superintendents and teachers felt "environmental and ecological programs" should have high priority for increased money; those programs got first and second place ratings from the professional groups, fifth place from the general public, sixth place from school board members, and ninth place from students.

Where should the extra money to be spent on these programs come from?

There was no consensus among respondents on that question. "Taking money from other programs" was the option least mentioned.

Raising taxes and getting the money from a vague "somewhere else" received about equal mention, with such suggestions as using existing funds better, having local school fund-raising, and cutting other state programs.

Two questions brought strong consensus.

A statement that public schools should offer programs for three- and four-year-olds was opposed by a majority of all respondent groups. (Students were not asked this question.) The program for four-year-olds was opposed by 60 to 71 percent of the responding groups, and the program for three-year-olds, by 77 to 95 percent.

Is enough being done to identify children with "emotional, mental or physical problems" and those with "special intellectual, artistic, or athletic talents?"

Not enough is being done in either area, according to at least 50 percent of each group queried.

Involvement in decisions

Involvement by the community in the local school system is at the very heart of Illinois' public school system and is a principle on which nearly everyone agrees.

But how much involvement, by whom, and in which areas are questions that draw a wide range of opinions.

The general public, public opinion leaders (persons identified as active in school affairs), teachers, school board members, school administrators and students were asked questions that revealed some basic differences, and many similarities, in their views.

At least 95 percent of each group

of a promise you're going to do something about it," said Ms. Carithers. "It's bad public relations not to."

Writing in *Clearing House* (February, 1972), Jerry J. Herman listed the conducting of attitudinal surveys as the first in a list of activities undertaken in a comprehensive communications program in the Youngstown, New York School District.

A committee formulated recommendations based on survey results, Herman wrote, and "a detailed reason for not implementing each recommendation is made a matter of public information."

The responsibility works in both directions, however. Citizens should give up their right to criticize and complain if they aren't willing to make choices when surveyed.

For school boards considering surveys, here are some brief points:

1) **There are 20 to 30** academic research organizations in the country, plus scores of market research companies and private research companies. A district should be careful about the organization it chooses to conduct its survey. A company that is expert in private business may not understand public administration.

2) **Keep it short** and sweet if you're doing-it-yourself, Ms. Carithers advises. Generally, a district doesn't have the resources to respond to 40 or 50 questions at a time.

3) **Don't expect meaningful** responses on specific programs that the public doesn't understand. Administrators are hired because they are experts in that area. A survey might reveal, however, how ready the public is to accept a good new program, or whether education is needed before the program is launched.

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felt that community should be involved or "somewhat" involved—in planning, setting goals, evaluating, and decision-making in the school districts.

Ninety-eight percent of each adult group was in favor of some degree of teacher involvement; but 93 percent of the teachers thought they should be "very" involved, while only 82 percent of the general public, 79 percent of principals, 74 percent of school board members, and 65 percent of superintendents thought teachers should be "very" involved.

More of the general public (54 percent) thought students should be "very" involved than did students themselves (46 percent). A low percentage of principals and superintendents, 27.8 and 24.7 percent respectively, thought students should be "very" involved. However, 67 percent of principals and 68 percent of superintendents favored students being "somewhat" involved.

Nearly 90 percent of each adult group favored community involvement in school financial matters.

A majority of all groups, including students, was against student involvement in school financial matters.

Community involvement in the hiring and/or evaluation of personnel met with an unfavorable response. Only 20 percent of school board members, 14 percent of principals, and 16 percent of superintendents favored such involvement, and 65 percent of teachers and public opinion leaders opposed such involvement.

An overall majority of adult groups favored teacher involvement in hiring and evaluation; but differing viewpoints showed up among the various groups. Three-fourths of the teachers favored involvement, but only 46 percent of school board members, 56 percent of public opinion leaders and 68 percent of the general public favored teacher involvement in these areas.

Only 37 percent of the students and teachers favored student involvement in the area of hiring and evaluation.

There was general agreement among a majority of all respondents that community, teachers, and students should be involved in planning new facilities and buildings.

Community, teacher, and student input in curriculum and course offerings also was favored by every group, with at least 94 percent of each group favoring teacher involvement, and more than 80 percent of each group favoring student input.

In response to another question, respondents overwhelmingly agreed greater use of school facilities should be made for community recreation and educational activities. Those in favor of this proposal ranged from 89 percent of the general public to 94 percent of the school board members/administrators group.

All groups also agreed that a school building should be planned to include both educational and recreational facilities.

Community members, however, should be charged admission or rent when they use school facilities, more than 70 percent of all groups agreed. Strongest agreement came, surprisingly, from the general public group, 76 percent.

How people learn about their school district could have an effect on what they think about it.

The general public and public opinion leaders (defined as those active in school affairs) were queried about their sources of information about their schools. More than 80 percent of each group got information from the newspapers.

Public opinion leaders, however, received more of their information from school personnel (85 percent), meetings at school (78 percent), and children (76 percent), than does the general public.

The general public's responses were 52 percent from school personnel, 43 percent from meetings at school, and 62 percent from children. (Respondents indicated more than one source of information.)

Clearly, then, public opinion leaders receive more of their information about schools from direct sources than do members of the general public. Whether this is a cause or an effect is difficult to determine, but it

Illinois survey results *continued*

does indicate the source of some of the differences in viewpoint that arise in every community over the schools.

School funding

The general public in Illinois favors boosting state funding of school costs to at least 50 percent, but is reluctant to support an accompanying increase in taxes.

In the categories of attitudes toward local school districts and assessment of local school systems, questions about school financing were virtually the only ones which drew negative responses. Those questions were asked only of the public and opinion leader groups.

Although 60 percent of both groups advocated increasing the level of state financial support from the current 40 percent to a minimum of 50 percent, the general public opposed by percentages of 60 and 56 percent, respectively, raising either the state sales tax or income tax. Opinion leaders also rejected a sales tax hike by a 59 percent majority, but indicated a willingness (62.5 percent) to finance increased school aid through a higher state income tax.

When those who opposed tax increases were asked how the necessary funds should be raised, they suggested using existing funds better, holding a lottery, diverting funds from other state programs, charging families with children in school, or boosting property or corporate taxes. None of the alternate methods was mentioned in any significant degree, however.

On another school finance issue, just over half of the general public (51 percent) disagreed that tax monies should be used to help support nonpublic schools.

More than 90 percent of the public, opinion leader, and student groups considered the issue of equal educational opportunity to be very or somewhat important.

Other attitudes toward local districts which were surveyed concerned school board elections, the school district budget, and consolidation of smaller districts.

From one-half to three-quarters of all groups queried about elections preferred at-large election of board members over selection of members by neighborhood or precinct. Of the groups asked whether the school district budget is managed well, affirmative responses ranged from the 59 percent by the public to 94 percent by the school board-administrator group.

Although most persons surveyed felt consolidation of smaller districts into a larger one would expand course offerings and improve fiscal efficiency, a majority of those responding didn't think it would result in an overall better education.

Teacher rights

Mention "collective bargaining" and there's bound to be disagreement, especially if the persons discussing it are teachers and school administrators. Teachers voice their support of collective bargaining; administrators and school board members are wary.

One section of the survey dealt with teacher concerns, including teacher collective bargaining; strikes; sex or racial prejudice in teacher recruiting, salaries and job assignments; and teacher training.

Four of five teachers (84 percent) surveyed felt the state legislature should pass a bill providing uniform procedures allowing teachers to join together for collective bargaining. Two of three persons in the general public (67 percent) and half of the school principals (51 percent) agreed. However, less than one in three superintendents (29 percent) and barely one in four school board members (26 per cent) agreed.

When the subject turned to teacher strikes, even less support was found in any quarter. Teachers and students were the only groups who gave a favorable response when asked if teachers should be allowed to strike: 63 percent of the teachers said yes, as did 60 percent of the students. Only 44 percent of the general public and 33 percent of public opinion leaders agreed. Support dropped even further among principals, with 25 percent agreeing, and school board members, with 18 percent agreeing. Only 6 percent of the superintendents felt teachers should be allowed to strike.

One interesting fact turned up by the Survey Research Lab was that tolerance for collective bargaining and teacher strikes declined as the age of the respondent increased. While 81.8 percent of the general public aged 20-29 agreed with collective bargaining for teachers, only 61.4 percent of those 50-59 years old and 60.9 percent of those 60-69 were for collective bargaining; 61.8 percent of the general public aged 20-29 assented to teacher strikes, compared to only 32.9 percent of those 50-59 and only 31 percent of those 60-69 years old.

Does sex or racial prejudice exist in teacher recruitment, salaries or job assignments? Here, again, the opinions vary.

Superintendents were the most emphatic in agreeing there is no sex prejudice in salaries (98 percent said there is none), recruitment (87 percent) and job assignments (83 percent.)

Teachers, on the other hand, aren't quite as positive in their responses. Eighty percent of the teachers agreed there is no sex prejudice in salaries and 55 percent agreed to the lack of sex prejudice in recruitment. However, less than half the teachers (48 percent) agreed that there is no sex prejudice in job assignments: 46 percent felt there is sex prejudice in job assignments, and 6 percent said they did not know.

There was similar disagreement between teachers and administrators over the presence or absence of racial prejudice in recruitment, salaries and job assignments. Superintendents felt there was no racial discrimination in salaries (98 percent agreed there was no prejudice), recruitment (84 percent) and job assignments (81 percent). Teachers, however, agreed only to a lack of racial prejudice in the area of salaries (66 percent agreed). In job assignments, only 45 percent of the teachers agreed there was no prejudice, 34 percent disagreed and 21 percent said they did not know. In teacher recruitment, only 43 percent agreed there was lack of racial prejudice, 34 percent disagreed and 23 percent did not know.

When asked about their own education to become teachers, three out of four teachers responded favorably, rating their teacher training as good to excellent. Fifty-one percent said their training was good and 24 percent said it was excellent. One-fourth rated their education only fair (19 percent) or poor (5 percent).

The most popular forms of inservice training for the teachers were university courses and department workshops. More than three-fourths of the teachers (77 percent) found university courses helpful, while 68 percent felt department workshops were helpful; 64 percent mentioned professional meetings, 61 percent specified district workshops and 54 percent listed workshops offered by Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Student rights

The general public believes confidential student files should be open to inspection by parents, but not to the student, according to the survey.

However, school officials—teachers, principals and superintendents—feel that neither the parents nor the students should be allowed to view those files.

Six of the approximately 50 questions on the survey dealt directly with student concerns—student files, physical punishment of students, teacher treatment of students and student safety.

The survey found that nearly three-fourths of the general public (73 percent) felt parents should have the right to read all confidential school files about their children. School board members and public opinion leaders agreed (70 percent of each category). Even a majority (58 percent) of the students agreed. However, less than half the principals (48 percent), teachers (45 percent), and superintendents (40 percent) agreed with this practice.

When the question was posed whether students should have this right, only the students themselves felt they should. All other groups turned thumbs down. Only 39 percent of the general public felt students should have the right to read all confidential school files about themselves, 27 percent of the public opinion leaders felt they should, 26 percent of school board members, 20 percent of the teachers, and 18 percent of the principals and superintendents agreed. The student group had endorsed the issue by 83 percent.

Students also substantially disagreed with their elders regarding physical punishment of students. Nearly nine out of every ten students (87 percent) said teachers should not be allowed to punish students physically. Half of the general public sampled (51 percent) felt teachers **should** be allowed to punish students physically; 54 percent of the teachers said yes, and 48 percent of school board members, 46 percent of the principals, and 58 percent of the superintendents agreed.

One-half of the general public said children are disciplined equally and fairly, while only one-fourth of the students agreed that they are.

Parents and public opinion leaders were rather evenly divided in their opinions as to whether teachers pay enough attention to students as individuals. Nearly half the parents (48 percent) felt teachers paid enough attention to students, while 46 percent felt they did not; 50 percent of the public opinion leaders said yes they did, compared to 45 percent who said no they didn't. The rest of the parents and public opinion leaders said they didn't know. The student sample was more emphatic in its opinion—59 percent felt teachers do not pay enough attention to them as individuals, whereas 41 percent feel they do.

Most groups agreed teachers expect the same of students, regardless of race. However, less than half (48 percent) of the public opinion leaders agreed, and 21 percent of this category said they did not know. There was less question in the students' minds than in their parents. Seventy percent of the students felt teachers expect the same, regardless of race, whereas 54 percent of the parents agreed.

A majority of all groups agreed teachers expect the same thing educationally from all children, regardless of parent's income or occupation. Students, again, were the most emphatic in their agreement—71 percent. Sixty percent of the parents and 56 percent of the public opinion leaders agreed.

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Illinois School Board Journal
September-December 1973

How do your voters rank your district's priorities?

By ALLEN KLINGENBERG

School district surveys of voter opinion usually prove interesting. But they also usually end up gathering dust on a shelf.

How can a survey that tells school officials what the community thinks be converted into action?

Elementary District 67 in Lake Forest found the answer in a commercial marketing technique known as "value research." The technique had never been applied to a school district before, so the process proved lengthy (one year to complete) and could have proved expensive. But the results proved so enlightening that benefits to the schools should continue to mount up for several years.

In the business world, marketing experts use value research to relate customer attitudes to the cost of a product or service. In the case of the school district, it is a matter of relating voter attitudes to the costs of school programs. The purpose is to ensure that the school district and its residents place about the same emphasis on the various programs.

(For example, suppose that parents think the music program is far more essential than industrial arts. And suppose that the district spends a great deal of time and money on industrial arts but very little on music. Might these facts not suggest some changes in program emphasis?)

Although the project started before the state superintendent issued the revised recognition standards, the input to district goal setting fits perfectly into the district's required program plan.

(See Pathfinder Report No. 11 on "Program Planning" in the May-June, 1973 issue of *Illinois School Board Journal.*)

More important, however, is that District 67 residents now know that the school board cares what they think and that the board is willing to make changes to meet their expectations.

Some essential history

Elementary District 67 (enrollment 2,000) is located in a Lake County community of some 16,000 residents. The district is widely recognized for its excellence, but was forced to cut back some programs in the fall, 1971, following a tax rate referendum defeat.

The nine-member school board and the Association of Parents and Teachers (APT) engaged independently in studying the district's status. Shortly, they decided to work together in a joint study of parent opinion.

Before going far, they approached a former district resident for help—Thomas Snodgrass, president of Value Standards, Inc., a Chicago-based management consulting firm. The firm agreed to help the district for only the cost of its out-of-pocket expenses and to risk the investment of staff time in developing a model which hopefully could be applied to other school systems.

Administrators, parents, and teachers agreed to volunteer their time for six to eight months to see the project through. Representatives of the APT, board, and administration formed a 20-member coordinating committee. Another 40 volunteers were trained as poll takers.

At the beginning of the project, the consulting firm

Allen Klingenberg is superintendent of Elementary District 67, in Lake Forest.

This school board found a way to get community opinion that could be converted into specific action. Marketing experts call it "value research."

emphasized the necessity for input from the total community. Products and services must meet the customer's desires in order to have good value. (This seems to be the same rationale which the OSPI has incorporated in the revised school evaluation standards.)

It was decided that the significant characteristic influencing a person's perception of the schools was whether he was a parent of a public school elementary child, a parent of a non-public school elementary child or a taxpayer with no children enrolled in elementary school. The coordinating committee discovered that only one-third of the voters in the school district had children enrolled in the public elementary schools and that nearly one-half of the voters in the community had no children in either public or non-public elementary schools.

Using this information, the committee determined the percentages of each group to be contacted for interviews. The consultant firm determined that a total of 400 persons should be sampled with the questionnaire to assure statistically significant feedback from each segment of the community. The breakdown of voters representing those categories was as follows:

SEGMENT	PERCENTAGE OF VOTERS IN SEGMENT	NUMBER IN SAMPLE
Voters with children in Public school	33%	132
Voters with children of school age in Private School	18%	72
Voters with no children in elementary school	49%	196

To secure accurate representation in the sample, parent lists were obtained from the public elementary schools and local private schools. These names were deleted from the voter registration list to avoid duplication in selecting voters with no children in elementary schools. Each of the names on the three lists was numbered. Through the use of a random number table, a list of 400 was chosen in the proportions mentioned above. Forty APT volunteers personnally delivered the 400 questionnaires in April, 1972. The response was gratifying. During May and June, 330 responses, or 82 percent of those surveyed, were tabulated. The public school parents responsed 100 percent; voters' list, 74 percent; and non-public school parents, 73 percent.

The community was involved in the survey in a number of ways. The APT, which represents 61 percent of the parents of public school children, was kept informed of the progress of the survey by parent representatives in each school attendance area. The coordinating committee numbered 20. The composition of the group doing the study consisted of the nine members of the school board, five APT members (each representing a school building), two APT executive board members, and four administrators.

An additional 40 APT volunteers were trained by Value Standards, Inc. to explain the purpose of the study and the questionnaire, to collect data, and how to use the random selection process.

Voter attitudes

The voter questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part contained a series of open-ended questions which allowed the respondent to express views on key function areas. The questions in this part were designed to elicit both favorable and unfavor-

able comments.

The second group of questions was based on a method used by Value Standards to develop a Voter Acceptance Index to measure the total community acceptance of the school program. Five questions were used to develop this index. The Voter Acceptance Index was directly affected by the favorable or unfavorable comments obtained in the initial questions.

The final group of questions contained a list of specific school functions. Here the respondent could rate the various functions in order of perceived importance and indicate whether the functions were being performed adequately or inadequately by the school system. From this data a profile of the district's "Areas of Success" and "Areas for Improvement" were obtained. All respondents rated the relative importance of these functions; however, only the public school parent group rated adequacy. The survey revealed an overall composite Voter Acceptance Index of 85 percent with the individual segments as follows:

How to conduct "value research"

Want to duplicate the "value research" project pioneered by Lake Forest District 67? Here in a brief outline are the ten steps you will have to take.

1) Develop a complete list of the school district's basic and supporting functions. (See adjoining article, page 15, for a partial list of the 30 functions identified by District 67.)

2) Analyze each function and state in plain language:
- a) What is done.
- b) How it is done.
- c) Why it is done.

3) Categorize functions as:
- a) Tasks (e.g., "Educate children.")
- b) Basic functions (e.g., "Install basics.")
- c) Supporting functions (e.g., "Feed pupils.")

Note: Functions are categorized as basic or supporting by asking how the "task" is done. For example, "How are children educated" (the task) is answered by "Instill basics" (a basic function) and "Feed pupils" (a supporting function).

4) Further diagram functions by asking "how" various functions are performed, establishing branches or secondary functions. For example, "How do we instill basics?" Answers: Teach reading, teach math, teach communications, etc. The process is called function analysis and the result is an array of school district functions.

5) Assign actual costs related to each function. This allocating of costs includes salaries based on actual hours devoted to an activity in relation to total hours in a work year.

Note: District 67 found it common to divide a teacher's salary among 12 or 15 different functions. A computer program was used to allocate costs on a program (function) basis.

6) Collect data representing voter attitudes and "allocate" the data in a manner similar to that of costs. District 67 used a questionnaire with a random sample of voters. A computer program was used to analyze functions in relation to survey data just as it was used with cost data.

7) Evaluate results by comparing function costs with voter attitudes. In other words, "Where are the major expenditures and how do they relate to voter attitudes?"

8) Develop plans to ensure that district programs meet the "voter value standard"—a balance between program costs and voter attitudes.

Note: To achieve higher voter acceptance, "untolerable" attitudes must be identified and the causes eliminated. For example, a large percentage of District 67 voters said, "The school doesn't tell us what is going on." District personnel considered this an attitude that could not be tolerated because it undermines voter acceptance of the total school system. One corrective action taken by the school board was to allocate funds to employ a public relations officer.

9) Once corrective measures have been planned for the various problem areas, the next step is to generate creative ways to reduce costs without adversely affecting voter acceptance. A brainstorming session involving board members, parents, and teachers worked very well for District 67. "What other ways could we feed pupils?" is an example of the questions studied.

10) Establish an action plan to deal with the problems identified. District 67 incorporated its action plan in the Program Plan for submission to the office of Public Instruction.

The cost of a study similar to the one undertaken in Lake Forest will vary, depending upon how much of the total project is used. According to Thomas Snodgrass, president of Value Standards, Inc., this could range from $5,000 for a voter attitude study to approximately $10,000 for the total project, assuming an adequate amount of volunteer help.

Analysis of school costs and community attitudes revealed ways in which the district could reassign dollars to improve programs that the community viewed as important.

Public School Parents:	85.5%
Private School Parents:	76.0%
Voters with No Children in Elementary School	84.9%

District 67 had no basis of comparison because no other school system has developed anything comparable to a Voter Acceptance Index. However, it is safe to assume that a composite Voter Acceptance Index of 85 percent though healthy, indicates opportunities to increase the voters regard for a school district. In educational management studies an acceptance index of 85 is viewed as extremely high, whereas in commercial market research an acceptance index of 96 is viewed as high.

The matter of judging and allocating the comments obtained from the questionnaire was an important step in determining voter attitudes. Once the questionnaires were tabulated, all the answers to each question were carefully analyzed to determine what the respondents were really saying in terms of a specific function. If a comment had to do with "teach reading," it was assigned to this basic function. If a comment had to do with "inform public," it was assigned to that particular supporting function.

Further, it was determined whether a comment was favorable of unfavorable. In this manner, all comments were allocated to the Function Analysis List and accumulated under the appropriate function. It was from this process that an outline of the functions of the school system was developed indicating how the voters of Lake Forest felt about the performance of each function. From the forced-choice questions in the questionnaire, voters ranked the importance of each program. Parents of public elementary students were asked whether each program was being performed adequately or inadequately.

A total of 30 school functions were ranked in the order of importance assigned by survey respondents. Parents of children in the elementary schools also were asked whether they felt each function was being adequately performed.

Here is a list of the top 10 functions as ranked by the respondents, along with the percentage of parents who felt that the function is being adequately performed:

1. Instill learning processes—63 percent.
2. Foster independence—48 percent.
3. Provide motivation—59 percent.
4. Foster citizenship—69 percent.
5. Encourage individuality—67 percent.
6. Discipline students—61 percent.
7. Evaluate students—72 percent.
8. Teach communication—79 percent.
9. Teach mathematics—84 percent.
10. Provide parent-teacher communications—62 percent.

The survey showed that voters rated "instill learning processes" as the most important function of the district. Among voters with children attending the public schools, 63 percent feel that the district is performing this function adequately. Rated thirtieth—least important—was "provide lunch room."

From these adequacy ratings, the coordinating committee was able to develop a profile of the school district's "Areas of Success" and "Areas for Improvement." Among other things, this process indicated to the district that the voters believe that "foster independence" and "provide motivation" are two critical functions which either need bolstering, a better line of communication to the public, or both.

It was further necessary to consider whether the various unfavorable comments allocated to functions were tolerated or non-tolerated. Tolerated functions

are those which do not affect the Voter Acceptance Index and should not be considered as problems. The non-tolerated functions require improvement. Examples of non-tolerated comments which came from parents with children in the public schools were: Establish Class Size, Discipline Students, Instill Basics, Evaluate Staff (Quality Teachers), Teach Music (Instrumental and Vocal), Develop Uniqueness, Consult Specialists.

Unfavorable comments affecting acceptance by private school parents were in order: Develop Uniqueness, Diagnose Individuals, Establish Class Size, Instill Basics, Evaluate Staff, Discipline Students. Unfavorable comments affecting acceptance by voters with no children in elementary schools were: Discipline Students, Instill Basics, Develop Uniqueness.

The committee found certain functions to which the majority of voters, regardless of category, were indifferent and considered less important than educators. District 67 voters gave relatively unimportant ratings to psychological services, nursing service and vocal music. This finding validated actions the board and administration had already taken to cut back in these areas to reduce expenditures. It should be noted, however, that parents with children in the elementary public school rate these functions as more important than the voters represented by the other two groups.

Allocation of costs to the various programs showed that the school district spent 76 percent of its 1971-72 budget for basic functions and 24 percent for supporting functions. Although no comparable financial results are available, experience indicates that in industry a 50-50 split between basic and supporting function costs is quite common. The finding may indicate that more of the school dollar should be spent in supporting functions and less in basic functions in Lake Forest.

The cost analysis, along with attitudes obtained through the questionnaire, revealed several areas where the district could reassign dollars to optimize expenditures on functions which all three community groups viewed as important and where improved service was desired.

Using the findings

Using survey results, the board of education and staff have already instituted action in the following areas:

1) **The school board** and administrative staff are working toward a program-oriented budget system—one that more closely relates costs to specific programs and functions. Funds have been budgeted for this in 1973-74.

2) **To improve** parent-administration communications, the board has: Employed a part-time public relations person, initiated a bi-monthly newsletter for all Lake Forest residents, initiated a bi-weekly column in the weekly newspaper, and set up a speaker's bureau.

3) **The district has,** for the past four years, been developing Learning Centers in each school, along with in-service workshops and teacher training courses, aimed at individualized instruction. A staff committee has developed a summer math program. Funds have been budgeted to develop an instructional system at the Junior High that uses performance objectives, pre-tests, post-tests, retrieval and recording of student performance data.

3) **Board, staff,** and APT committees have studied pupil progress reporting practices. More comprehensive reporting in all grades has been implemented or is planned. The option of evening conferences has been offered at the Junior High and is planned for all schools in 1973-74.

5) **Three committees** of board members and citizens have worked for two years to develop goals and objectives for District 67. Survey findings were integrated with board policy statements covering education, finance, and communication.

6) **An administrative** position for articulating the instructional program among the primary, intermediate, and junior high divisions was created.

7) **A management-by-objectives** system for all administrators and teachers was developed.

8) **The learning** disabilities teaching staff was expanded to service children on the waiting list.

Consolidation: A panacea that wasn't needed?

Reprinted from
School Board
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Could the 45-year campaign to consolidate rural schools have been a major mistake? It is heresy to even suggest that the conventional wisdom which has eliminated more than 112,000 school districts since 1930 could be wrong. But that's what researchers in a report for the National Institute of Education (NIE) contend. None of the selling points for rural consolidation — economy, efficiency and equality — hold up under the scrutiny of Jonathan Sher, education director of the Center for Community Change, and Rachel Tompkins, associate director of the Citizens' Council for Ohio Schools.

The cornerstone of the arguments for saving money through consolidation was the concept of the reduction of unit costs as size increases. However, the researchers point out, this concept consistently fails to take into consideration the offsetting "diseconomies." When increased transportation costs are included, "the economies from consolidation tend to decrease markedly, or vanish altogether."

Their study also attacks the argument of more efficiency in consolidation. For example, an administrator in a larger district is responsible for a much greater number of students and faculty. And as for equality, despite reorganization, great inequities remain between districts in wealth, tax rate and expenditures — regardless of size.

But the most appealing argument of all — that of improved quality of education — is also a myth, they say. Researchers who control for IQ and social class find no correlation between size and achievement, and the Coleman Report even found a negative correlation between greater size and grade level achievement, Sher and Tompkins say. Nor does the evidence show that students from larger schools do better in college. Students in small schools, however, participate more in activities which support the academic program, there is more quality in their involvement and they are more satisfied about it.

Why, then, has there been so much consolidation when it is not justified? The researchers say that schools were affected by the "modernization in government" concept of efficiency and economy, by the rise of the profession of school administration which emphasized "scientific management" and by the financial incentives offered by many states for school districts to merge.

The researchers stress three lessons in rural consolidation. Small schools deserve more attention and research should be directed at maintaining and improving existing small schools. Alternatives, such as regionalizing expensive programs, should be considered. And research done to demonstrate the value of practice "should be scrutinized very carefully." Even with all their spending and all their new resources, they conclude, "rural people still did not generally receive that which they wanted most dearly — better life chances for their children." Copies of the study, *Economy, Efficiency and Equality: The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation*, are available free from NIE's School Finance and Management Division, HEW, Washington, D. C. 20208. **Source: Education U.S.A., November 15, 1976.**

Community input

continued from page 32

years in Illinois. For one thing, they do not normally provide a scientifically valid picture of community sentiment. The average citizen rarely attends such hearings and rarer still does he speak up. The hearings do present an *opportunity* for speaking up, however, and that may be all that is desired or legally required. Obtaining the views of only those persons or groups who have strong feelings, however, is not sound from either a philosophical or practical standpoint. Such input should not be ignored, but it is only the tip of the public opinion iceberg.

To be truly useful, the public hearing must be planned to provide a broad spectrum of input. This means that a representative sampling of residents must be identified and urged to testify. It also calls for a substantial educational effort on the part of the school district. Citizens must be given extensive information about the school district's programs, why district goals need to be developed, what goals are and how they are used, and specifically what the district wants to know from the citizen.

Most citizens will be bowled over when asked for their views on goals. Probably no one has ever asked for such views before. Few have even given much thought to educational goals.

The typical citizen, even after 12 years in the public school system, knows very little about public education. Information on what the public schools teach and how they teach it is conspicuously absent from the public school curriculum. It is almost as absent from the school board meeting and the news media.

The pump of citizen input will have to be primed. This is where the board and superintendent exercise the function called "educational leadership."

Unless specifically invited to take part, and unless given some understanding of the issues to be addressed, the average citizen will not show up at a pub-

CORRIGENDUM

Community input *continued from page 47*

lic hearing on something so vague as "district goals" or "student goals."

The well-planned hearing will have to be an event in itself—not part of a board meeting. Several sessions may be needed, in fact, to get the job done.

(It appears that minimal state requirements can be met by merely providing some time on a board meeting agenda. It probably is possible to slide by the topic with no testimony at all if the agenda is kept quiet beforehand.)

There are differences of opinion as to who should hear testimony on the subject of district educational goals. Some would opt for the board of education.

Certainly, the board should be represented. A board member—preferably the president—should use the hearing as an opportunity to state the board's purpose and its function as the ultimate decision-maker. Also, this would be a golden opportunity for all board mem-

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Four principles of community involvement

Pared to its essentials, community involvement is a contemporary way of saying "communication."

The current emphasis is on listening, however, and that is good, for communication has too long been defined as, "I'll talk, you listen."

Here are four principles for effective listening that may be helpful as school officials involve their communities in goal development.

1) Expect reliable information only from reliable sources. Human beings are subject to what Harold Hand called the three "psychic deluders." First, we tend to generalize from a few observations, all of which may be unreprensentative. (Three citizens with gourmet tastes tell you that the school lunches are bad, and all of a sudden you believe that everyone in town thinks the lunches are bad.) Second, people are reluctant to be frankly critical, at least those without a personal axe to grind. (Discounting the chronic complainers, how many people yesterday told you anything bad about the schools?) Finally, we tend to hear things the way we want to hear them. The senses and the brain conspire to screen out or modify information that contradicts our own biases. (School officials talk at length about the number of their students who graduate from college, deftly ignoring the much larger number who drop out, flunk out, or graduate without learning to read.)

To be reliable, information must be gathered by a process that is itself reliable, not by accident or hearsay.

2) What people think is just as important as what they know. The average citizen forms opinions about the schools with the aid of little information. This has at least two implications for school officials:

a) Opinions based on misinformation are usually strong, contagious, and create the environment in which schools must operate. Although the public may be "wrong" in the eyes of school officials, the public is never "wrong" at the polls. It is advisable to know that a certain segment of the community has a "wrong" opinion on a particular issue, but it is never advisable to ignore that opinion.

b) School officials must assume responsibility for correcting misinformation—for seeing to it that as many citizens as possible have facts upon which to base their opinions.

People respond differently when they are well-versed on a subject. A committee made up of uninformed citizens will be much less productive than one made up of citizens who are well-informed. But that doesn't make the uninformed citizen any less important. It is up to school officials to make information available, and a citizens' advisory council provides a good opportunity for citizen education.

3) The purpose of community input should be to facilitate decisions—not to avoid them or put them off. Community input is a form of "management information" that should be used by the administration and the school board in arriving at decisions. Many boards and administrators, however, subject themselves to a never-ening array of chaotic input—gripes and complaints, primarily—and are never able to really pin down what the community thinks. The result is a kind of decisional paralysis. No one is sure what the community thinks so the decision is delayed in hopes that the next petitioner before the board will have the answer.

Community thinking must be gathered in a systematic manner and put into understandable form. Then it becomes a part of all the information that the board must use in arriving at a decision.

4) Community input should strengthen—not weaken—the administrative structure. The superintendent and whatever staff members he wishes to involve should provide leadership in working with the community. A board that deals directly with community groups and takes action without consulting its chief administrator rapidly weakens its administrative staff. That is not to say that the administrator is always right. Nor should he be allowed to obstruct or waterdown community input. But the board hires a superintendent to serve as its professional adviser. If they don't seek his advice, they effectively eliminate him from that role. Further, if the community can get action by going directly to the board, then the superintendent no longer need exist as far as the community is concerned.

bers to learn what people think and learn about the curriculum, too.

However, if the board is to operate properly in relation to its professional staff, then the staff also should be well represented at the hearing. Hopefully, it will be up to the staff to use testimony in developing recommendations for the board. The board would be ill-advised to act on testimony without staff recommendations.

Advisory Committees. Advisory committees are becoming more popular in education and are notably effective when created for a specific assignment. Drafting or reacting to educational goals can be just such an assignment.

The advantage of an advisory committee is that it provides for continuing dialogue—for discussion between a group of citizens and school officials. It also provides a way for exploring in depth the best thinking of individuals selected to serve because of special abilities or interests.

The disadvantage of citizen advisory committees is the limited number of persons who can be involved.

As with any other channel for community input, it is essential that the committee understand its purpose and the procedures it should follow. Unless properly guided, committee members might reasonably expect to make some decisions in place of the school board.

Again, it is essential that the committee have a clear assignment: Is it supposed to draft goals from scratch or react to goals drafted by the staff?

Here are some additional tips for working with advisory committees:

- In selecting members, try to get a representative sampling of district residents. Don't be afraid to invite the constructive school critic, but avoid the one who is wild-eyed in pursuit of this or that pet project. Also, hand-pick some interested, knowledgeable people who are known to have good ability.
- Set meetings at times and places that are convenient.
- Don't expect the committee to make much progress starting with just a blank sheet of paper. Make background information available, show films, bring in speakers, arrange classroom visitations. Get the committee to thinking about education.
- Consider brainstorming or other small group techniques to generate and refine ideas.
- Provide committee members with recognition, such as announcements in the newspaper, service awards, and recognition banquets.
- Consider accepting volunteers for committee membership, if you think non-members might accuse the schools of being elitist.

As suggested earlier, it might be good to have the citizens' group work wholly or partially in tandem with a staff committee. In the end, the board will be getting staff reactions to the citizen input anyway. By working together, both teams might arrive at an early consenses and avoid major differences of opinion.

Surveys. Properly done, a survey of community opinion can produce more valid and useful information than any other technique. Because the survey does not provide for two-way discussion, however, getting it done properly is a real challenge.

The process of selecting persons to be surveyed is highly critical. Because survey results are usually expressed in numbers or percentages, the persons responding must be truly representative of the community. If enough manpower is available, school officials might advisably survey everyone in the district rather than a cross section. (In addition to eliminating the sampling task, this process should have a beneficial impact on the district's public relations. Everyone has a chance to contribute input.)

Questions which will make up the survey instrument must be carefully geared toward the kinds of things school officials want to know about. They should not merely probe around in the dark. Exploratory questionnaires may be used on a pilot basis, but they always lead to more questionnaires. That is, they raise more questions than answers.

If a district does not have personnel skilled in writing questionnaires, they would be well-advised to obtain consultant help.

How questionnaires are distributed bears directly on the number filled out and returned.

Good results are obtained by a personal visit from someone who is not acquainted with the respondent. Another technique is to invite selected respondents to a central location (a school auditorium) to fill out the questionnaire. This is particularly appropriate for parents, for they usually don't mind coming to school. Also, as part of a large group, their anonymity is guaranteed.

If questionnaires are distributed by mail, a series of follow-up letters and phone calls will be necessary. Only 20 to 30 percent of the recipients will return the questionnaire without further prodding. These are people who are extremely conscientious or who have strong feelings—pro or con—about the schools. This initial return has a built-in bias, therefore.

School officials should strive for a return of no less than 75 percent when surveying a representative sample of residents. Even that percentage could prove misleading on controversial issues. (Hopefully, goal setting will not get too controversial.)